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Labourers Together With God

A History of the
Hobolochitto Baptist Association

L. S. Walker



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"LABOURERS TOGETHER WITH GOD"
A HISTORY OF THE
HOBOLOCHITTO BAPTIST ASSOCIATION
L. S. WALKER

1979

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to my Wife, Dorothy;
to my Son, Richard Don and His
Wife, Donna Louise; and their
daughter, Amy Richelle.

John C. R.
John C. R.
John C. R.

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HISTORICAL TABLE



L. S. WALKER

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lester Stewart Walker was born at "Walker Hill" on east Pearl River near Picayune, Pearl River County, Mississippi, April 27, 1913. He is the son of Luther Berry and Gillie (Stewart) Walker.

He publicly acknowledge his call to the ministry in August, 1941. He was subsequently licensed to preach, and on January 9, 1942, ordained to the full work of the ministry by his home church.

Dr. Walker was married to Dorothy Goodroe of Whitesburg, Georgia, on August 29, 1936. They were blessed with one son, Richard Don Walker.

Dr. Walker attended Picayune High School. After high school he served in the U. S. Army at Fort Benning, Georgia. He attended the old Bogalusa Bible College from 1942-1944. Studied Bible and related subjects at Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, in 1945; and studied journalism from Christian Writers Guild School of Journalism, La Canada, California in 1968. He received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Southeastern Baptist College in 1978.

Dr. Walker has enjoyed a most interesting and eventful ministry. He has led and assisted in organizing and building many churches. These include two of Picayune's churches: the Mt. Calvary Baptist Church where he pastored the first nine years of his ministry; and Antioch Baptist Church. He also led in establishing the New Bethel Baptist Church in Pearl River County, Old Spanish Trail and Cedar Drive Baptist Churches in Hancock County; Mt. Calvary and Westwood Baptist Churches in Mobile, Alabama; and Woodlawn Baptist Church in Pascagoula, Mississippi. Other churches he served as pastor include Liberty, Oak Grove, First of Henleyfield and Mill Creek in Pearl River County; First Baptist Church in Bay Springs; Union Baptist Church in Smith County; Fairview (now Lighthouse) in Pascagoula, and Bethel (now Norwood Valley) Baptist Church in Jackson, Mississippi; and First Baptist of Springhill, Louisiana.

Dr. Walker has been a respected and trusted leader being twice elected to the position of president of the Baptist Missionary Association of America, 1958-1959. He was chosen president of the Baptist Missionary Association of Mississippi in 1972 and 1973. He had previously been elected president of the Alabama Baptist Association from 1952-1954; and president of the B.M.A. of Louisiana in 1957. He was seven times moderator of the Hobolochitto Baptist Association from 1944 till 1975; moderator of the Gulf Coast Baptist Association (Ala.-Fla.) 1951-1954; moderator of the Gulf Baptist Association in 1964.

Dr. Walker drafted the resolution adopted at the 1948 annual session of the Mississippi Baptist Association establishing Southeastern

Baptist College at Laurel. He was elected by that body as chairman of the college's first board of trustees where he served for some fifteen years. He was chairman of the board of trustees of the Mississippi Baptist Childrens Home from 1947 to 1951. He served three terms as chairman of the board of trustees of the BMA of America Theological Seminary in Jacksonville, Texas; three terms as chairman of the Baptist News Service committee; and three times chosen chairman of the Missionary Committee (interstate and world missions) of the Baptist Missionary Association of America.

Dr. Walker was founder and editor of the Alabama Baptist Banner, 1952-1957; editor of the Louisiana Baptist Builder 1957-58; editor of the Mississippi Baptist from 1966 to 1969. He was for some 15 years a staff writer for the old American Baptist. For the past seven years he has written a weekly devotional-commentary newspaper column, "Pulpit Points," in addition to numerous tracts, pamphlets, booklets and brochures. He is presently serving as Director of Public Information for the BMA of Mississippi.

Dr. Walker is chairman of the Mississippi Baptist Commission on History, a position he has filled since 1967. He has served on the board of directors for Prisoners Bible Crusade since its beginning in 1974.

He was honored by Masonry in Mississippi, having served as Grand Chaplain of the Grand Commandery of Mississippi, Knight Templar; and Grand Chaplain of the Grand Lodge of Mississippi, F. & A. M.

Dr. Walker is listed in Who's Who in Religion in America for 1976-77; Personalities of the South for 1975-76; Notable Americans of the Bicentennial Era, 1976-77; and the International Register of Profiles, International Biographical Centre, Cambridge, England, 1977-78.

He is a member of the International Platform Association founded 1831.

His travels, study and ministry have included most of the United States, Canada, Mexico, western and southern Europe and the Holy Land.

When a man thinks big about Christ, he will serve large for the people of the Christ.

My friend, Dr. L. S. Walker, has been, and is such a thinker and such a servant.

Academically: Brother Walker has applied himself to numerous opportunities to shape his life for the social, moral and spiritual buildup of those whom he might serve.

Spiritually: Brother Walker learned early in life to have no self-trust for his salvation from sin. His complete trust for salvation is vested in the Christ of God for that saving grace.

Professionally: Brother Walker has given total surrender to God, and to the will of God for his life of Christian service.

Ministerially: Brother Walker is a preacher of envious ability, a pastor of first order (He loves his people with a passion after that order demonstrated by Christ.) In missionary endeavor he has not been short in effectiveness. In evangelism he ranks high, and equally true to the New Testament demands.

As a Christian gentleman, in the Lord's service he is as close kin to the Apostle Paul as any I know. The two of them can well nigh equally say: "For me to live is for Christ to live." Brother Walker has kept his heart open to God, and his back to the world.

In a variety of ways (preaching, teaching, writing, etc.) Brother Walker has made it understandably clear that he is one of the best of today's scholars in the truths of Baptists of our area, of the South, of the nation, and of the world.

One thing more, I feel that Brother Walker's many friends join me in wishing for him a good success in this endeavor.

Ollie F. Parker, D. D.
Laurel, Mississippi

INTRODUCTION

In tracing the history of the churches of the Hobolochitto Baptist Association, their love and labors for the Lord, one follows a trail of trials, tears and triumphs.

There are several reasons for my writing such a history book. (1) It has been a burning desire within my heart for more than thirty years. Out of this desire I have traveled many miles, talked with many people, and searched many records and books for relevant information. (2) Above any other reason, I want this book to honor and glorify the Lord who loved me and gave Himself for me. (3) I sincerely hope that it will edify all who may read it's pages till He comes to gather His own unto Himself. (4) Then, because I feel that those who labored first in preaching the gospel and establishing the first churches - those who so courageously faced the frontiers, "broke the new ground, blazed the trail, and laid the foundations" upon which we build, deserve to be remembered - not only who they were, but what they did, how and why.

I pen these lines, therefore, as a memorial to the blessings of God upon His servants in every generation. They were indeed "Laborers together with God!"

"Then Joshua called the twelve men, whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man:

"And Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of Jordan, and take you up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel:

"That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, what mean ye by these stones?

"Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off; and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever." (Joshua 4:4-7).

It has been a burden of my heart to set the record straight on some obscured truths of history involving the historic work of true Baptists in this area.

I am fully aware of my lack of knowledge and ability of expression. I love history! But I lay no claim to being a historian. Maybe I'm writing on this subject simply because no one else has.

I readily confess that I do not know everything about the subject at hand, but I feel that I do know some things about it. These things I wish to state for posterity.

The history of the churches of the Hobolochitto Baptist Association covers a span of time in the history of this area of Mississippi and

southeast Louisiana from about 1840, with the beginning of the mission work of Eld. William H. Varnado, and covers an area which embraces the areas now known as Marion, Pearl River, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, George, Greene, Perry, Forest, Stone and Lamar counties in Mississippi; and Washington, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa and Orleans parishes in southeast Louisiana. At one time or other over these years, there have been cooperating churches represented at the annual sessions from each of these political subdivisions of the two states.

It is an impressive story of how the gospel was brought to the people of this broad area of the old South. It is a story of the struggles and progress of the churches; their united efforts to win the lost to Christ, strengthen the work, and send the gospel message of Salvation to every nation and to each generation.

While we will be dealing primarily with the history of the Hobolochitto Baptist Association as it is now known (from its beginning to the present), we will also be dealing in a lesser degree with the history of the Pearl River (County) Association, and the division which separated the two groups of churches, in addition to the West Pearl and Red Creek Associations, all of which were at one time one Association. Dr. Vance Havner, one of America's all-time great evangelists, once quoted a friend saying, "Baptists are many, but not much." Most of our divisions have been as a result of growth. Maybe some were born of doctrinal disagreements, and some possibly for less honorable reasons; but history will tell its own story. God knows all things. We are willing to let the matter rest in His hands. We must be about our Father's business!

History worth writing or reading must be an accurate accounting of factual events compiled without prejudice or bias. These facts must neither be exaggerated nor minimized. Like the Biblical example: the good and the bad, the favorable and the unfavorable, must be noted alike.

Your fellow laborer,
L. S. Walker

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I must acknowledge first of all, as I did in the introduction, that I am not a historian. I am certainly not a scholar, as much as I would like to be. I am hardly a fair student.

Recording history is always a simple matter of gathering reliable and factual information from whatever source, and passing it on to others.

I am profoundly grateful for the cooperation shown to me by so many - some nearby and others far away. My sources have been varied and numerous. The information, of whatever kind or source, passed on to me, has been compared and researched to the very best of my ability to do so. I have tried to be practical, positive and objective.

I have gleaned exhaustively from the following: Minutes of the Hobolochitto Baptist Association from 1860 to the present; including the Minutes of the old Peace and Union and State Line Associations; the Minutes of the Pearl River (County) Baptist Association; Red Creek Baptist Association, West Pearl River Baptist Association, Louisiana State Baptist Association, Baptist Missionary Association of Mississippi (Formerly the Mississippi Baptist Association.), General Association of Baptist Churches in Mississippi; Yearbooks of the Baptist Missionary Association of America; files of the Picayune Item, Poplarville Free Press, Pearl River Journal, Mississippi Baptist, and many area church records and historical sketches, etc.

Other sources include "Abstract History of Mississippi Baptists, 1806 to 1906;" "Complete History of Mississippi Baptist," by Leavel and Bailey; "Mississippi Baptist Preachers" by L. S. Foster (1904); "Life and Work of Eld. James P. Johnston," by E. B. Cox; "School History of Mississippi," by F. L. Riley (1900); "Brief History of Present State of Mississippi Baptist," by J. L. Boyd; "History of Mississippi Baptists," by R. A. McLemore (1971); "Mississippi Baptists at Work," by John Alexander; and all the books by S. G. "Grandpa" Thigpen, Sr.

In addition to the above named sources, I have talked at length with many older Baptist ministers who pastored the churches in this area in past years; and who knew many of the first ministers to preach in this section of the country. Also with many older men and women - sons and daughters of pioneer parents who settled this vast area and established the first churches. Some of these old ministers and church members were then in their seventies, eighties and nineties. I listened and noted what they said about the old preachers, old churches; their members, their ways, their trials and triumphs. All of these have long since gone to be with the Lord. We gladly share with you the stories they shared with us.

These old ministers included Eld. Walter A. Burks (1859-1944). His father, Eld. Roland E. Burks, was a minister of this area before him; Eld. James Quitman Sones (1876-1954), near 47 years pastor of Sones Chapel Baptist Church, baptized by Eld. Andrew M. Slaydon in Hobolochitto Creek in 1895; Eld. L. G. Varnado (1874-1967), grandson of Eld. W. H. Varnado, first missionary to this area about 1840; Eld. W. I. Williams (1869-1958); Eld. John W. Thomas (1875-1961); and Eld. A. Jack Spiers (1876-1945).

Also Mrs. Sarah Wheat Slaydon (1857-1951), daughter-in-law of Eld. A. M. Slaydon; Mrs. Maggie Farr Burks (1873-1945); James T. "Fiddlin' Jim" Stockstill (1857-1951), also baptized by Eld. W. H. Varnado in Pearl River, and a life-long member of Old Palestine Baptist Church; E. J. "Van" Stockstill, a charter member of First Baptist Church of Picayune (1870-1967); Joseph A. Burks (1873-1958); Henry E. Burks (1873-1967); Pink Smith (1868-1951); Harvey Burks (1879-1963); John J. Dillard (1874-1945); Jake Smith (1883-1963); Albert N. Mitchell (1872-1951); William Stockstill (1871-1956), and others.

Another very helpful advantage to me in preparing this work is the fact that I was born and reared in Pearl River County. Born in 1913, I am now 66 years old. I have lived here all my life except about 18 years pastoring in Alabama and Louisiana. Both my father and mother, and their father and mother (my grand-parents) were born and reared in this area. Then, of course, being a pastor myself for some 38 years has helped.

I am especially grateful to my dear wife, Dorothy, for her patience with me in this labor of love; for the advice and assistance of Jim and Hilda Hoffman; and to Eld. L. D. Whitfield; Eld. and Mrs. G. H. Gordon, and their daughter Donna; and to a host of other friends who encouraged me to complete this somewhat tiresome but joyful work.

L. S. Walker

Picayune, Mississippi

April, 1979

CHAPTER I

THE BAPTIST TAKE ROOT

The Baptists, their practices and principles, are as old as Christianity. responsible historians record no time of beginning for the Baptists this side of the earthly ministry of Christ. There is a direct succession of Baptist churches back to New Testament times; that is, Baptist churches have existed in principle and practice, though not always by name, in every centruy. Many historians, not of the Baptist persuasion or affiliation, attest to this truth.

The roots of the Baptists reach to the foundation depths of Christianity. They did not have their beginning during the "dark ages," nor with the great Reformation under the courageous leadership of Martin Luther and others, but with Jesus Christ and the material prepared by John the Baptist.

Sir Isaac Newton, described by Dr. John T. Christian as "one of the greatest men who ever lived;" and by another as "one of the greatest names in the history of human thought," declared, it was "his conviction that the Baptists were the only Christians who had not symbolized with Rome."

Respected historians attest to the existance of the Baptists in parts of Asia, Africa, Italy, Germany, Moravia, Switzerland, France, Holland and England in the early centuries before the Reformation.

The Baptist in America are the direct descendants of the Welsh Baptists. The origin of the Welsh Baptists is accounted for by Davis, in his History of the Welsh Baptists as follows: "In A.D. 63, while Paul was a prisoner in Rome (and for two years preached in his own hired house), a Welsh lady and her husband whose name was Pudens (and others who were of Caesar's household), visiting in Rome, were converted under Paul's preaching. They are referred to in Acts 28:30 and II Tim. 4:21. these people carried the gospel to Wales." - Baptist Way-Book.

Davis, Benedict, and other early historians tell of the existence of the Baptists in Wales before 300 A.D. The old Hill Cliff Church is believed to have been in existence before 600 A.D.

Dr. John Clarke led in organizing the first Baptist church in America at Newport, Rhode Island in 1638. In the same year Hanserd Nollys gathered a Baptist church at Dover. - Baptist Faith and Martyrs' Fires.

George W. McDaniel, in his book, "The People Called Baptists," says: "Character is determined by ideals and achievements. If we would know the place of the Baptists, we must consider their historic greatness, their historic fidelity to human liberty and their part in the life of the world. Our principles develop a type of character and life which

tends to make potent factors in achievements worthwhile.

"Baptists have been pioneers in so many fields that to enumerate these might seem to assume a braggart spirit. But a statement of irrefutable facts must be taken as dispassionate and impartial. Baptists have always been champions of civil and religious liberty. Roger Williams, who took ground in advance of the Puritan compeers on the subject of personal liberty, being banished from the colony of Massachusetts, went to the present site of Providence, Rhode Island, where he founded what is regarded by some as the first Baptist church in America, and the first commonwealth on earth in which there was absolute civil and religious liberty. The framers of the Constitution of the United States caught the spirit of Roger Williams and as a result we have a country which has been the refuge of the persecuted and oppressed of all nations. Article VI, on religious liberty in the American Constitution of the United States, guaranteeing freedom of speech, freedom of religion, and the right to petition, was adopted largely through the activity of Baptist. They took the initiative in a letter to President Washington and a month later Madison, with Washington's approval, presented the amendment

John Clarke, highly educated in arts and in medicine, the most outright and upright, important and influential American Baptist of the seventeenth century, did more than anyone else to call the attention of the world to Puritan intolerance. He secured the Charter of 1643 which made Rhode Island a free democratic State with full provision for liberty of conscience, and he was the originator of the public free school system. He founded the Newport church, which, for consistent and persistent devotion to Baptist principles, for completeness of organization and fervor in evangelism, deserves the priority."

Other early Baptist churches listed in Benedict's History, include churches in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Delaware, Connecticut and Maine from 1638 to 1750.

From these zealous Baptists the gospel message soon found its way west and south into Georgia, Kentucky, Tennessee, and into the Mississippi Territory before 1790.

BAPTISTS IN MISSISSIPPI TERRITORY

As the migration of people moved west, many were making their way down the Mississippi River to the Mississippi Territory and the Natchez country which came under Spanish rule in 1779. Just how long some Baptist settlers had been in the area, and how many, is not known. As soon as Spanish rule was established in the Natchez country, Roman Catholicism was declared the only allowable religion in the land.

“The Baptists in the Pee Dee River Valley of South Carolina furnished the Baptist migrants to Mississippi and thus are of special importance in the history of Mississippi Baptists. The original settlers in this fruitful and attractive agricultural area came from Pennsylvania. About 1735 some of these people became interested in the opportunities available to settlers in South Carolina. After an exploring expedition, a group migrated to the newly opened area and settled in a place called Welsh Neck. Here thirty of the settlers organized the Welsh Neck Baptist Church. The original records of this church reveal these people had been dismissed (granted letters - LSW) from the Welsh Tract Baptist Church. They were afterward joined by other migrants from this church, and other Baptist communities.” - A History of Mississippi by R. A. McLemore.

From these sturdy and courageous Baptist came the migrant families who established the first Baptist church on Mississippi soil.

In a brief note on “History of Old Salem Baptist Church,” the beloved Dr. J. L. Boyd says:

“The first Baptist church in Mississippi was the Salem, popularly known as Cole’s Creek church in Jefferson County, organized in October, 1791, before territorial days. A group of some thirty-five persons, mostly of the Baptist faith, left the Great Pee Dee Valley in South Carolina, early in 1780 and landed by flat boats on the Mississippi River some twenty miles north of Natchez. This Great Southwest was then under Spanish rule, intolerant toward all except those of the Catholic faith. The Baptists carried on their spiritual activities in the homes of the people, and thus were not molested. In October, 1791, they ventured to organize a church in the home of Sister Margaret Stampley of seven charter members, namely: Richard Curtis, Jr. (a licensed minister), Benjamin Curtis, William Curtis, John Jones, Ealiff Lanier, William Thompson and Margaret Stampley. (There is a memorial marker on the site of the old church building on the south fork of Cole’s Creek about 18 miles from Natchez. - LSW).

“The young preacher visited different plantations and influenced two of the Catholic faith to become Baptists - William Hamberlin and Stephen DeAlvo - whom he baptized in Cole’s Creek. News of this spread beyond the neighborhood and came to the ears of the Com-

mandant at Natchez. Curtis was given orders to cease violating the laws of the Province. A niece of the preacher became engaged to be married and young Curtis risked his safety by accommodating the young couple, performing the ceremony by night on the road by torch light.

"This spread like wild fire through the area. For these two breaches of the peace, together with the preacher's persistence in holding meetings in the homes of the people, orders went out for Curtis, Hamberlin and DeAlvo to be apprehended and brought to Natchez for trial with the prospect of their being sent to the silver mines of Mexico for life. A man hunt then began with Curtis and his friends hiding deep in the forest and the authorities hot on their trail. After considerable time it was decided that the culprits go back to South Carolina for the duration of Spanish rule. The men folk of the community however, feared to carry provisions and horses to the secret hiding place for the long cross-country trip. A woman in the community, named Aunt Chloe Holt, stepped forward and said, "If the men are too faint-hearted to go, saddle me a horse and I'll go and the Spaniards may catch me if they can." She dressed in men's clothing and dashed off, delivered the provisions and returned unmolested. That dramatic venture was her boast to the close of her life."

A note on the Beginnings of the Baptist Church in Mississippi in the School History of Mississippi (1900), by F. L. Riley, says: "In 1797 John Hannah, another Baptist minister, preached in Natchez, but was beaten and imprisoned for engaging in a dispute with some Irish Catholics, and making himself otherwise offensive to the Spanish authorities."

God forbid that we ever complain, but rather be thankful we could be counted worthy to suffer for His name's sake. Persecution by public flogging and imprisonment by Catholic authorities in the Natchez district of Mississippi was nothing new to the Baptists. They also suffered at the hands of Protestants in colonial times in Virginia, South Carolina, Massachusetts and other colonies.

Following the surrender of the Spanish government to that of the United States in 1798, and the return of Pastor Richard Curtis to his little flock, other Baptist churches were organized in rapid succession. On Friday before the third Sunday in August, 1798, the Bayou Pierre Baptist Church was constituted under the leadership of Richard Curtis and other male members of the Salem Church in the home of Thomas Hubbard. The meeting house was located about a mile north of west of Port Gibson, Claborne County. Others were organized in the following order: New Hope in Adams County in 1800; Bethel at Bayou Sara near Woodville in Wilkerson County, on July 27, 1805; Ebenezer, Amite County, May 6, 1806.

At a meeting of messengers from the above named five churches at

Salem Church in September, 1806, the old Mississippi Baptist Association was organized. Thus the Baptists take root in Mississippi. From this beginning, by the grace of God, came all the Baptists in Mississippi today. Baptists in Mississippi have been richly blessed in their labors for the Lord. There are more Baptists and more Baptist churches in Mississippi than all other denominations combined. In Pearl River County alone, there are now (1979) 72 Baptist churches -60 white and 12 Negro - representing seven different cooperative fellowships.

All the older churches did not cease to exist. Many of them are scattered throughout the state today. Just to mention two or three of a much larger number of these churches: Salem Baptist Church near Soso was constituted about 1817. A group to the north, near Corinth, organized into the Farmington Baptist Church sometime before 1812. The date is not known for certain. First Baptist Church in Bay Springs was constituted in 1828.

Two other associations were organized in 1820 - Pearl River and Union Associations. Continued growth through the missions and evangelistic zeal of those early churches resulted in the organization of yet other Associations. Among these were: The Buttahatchie Association in 1825; Leaf River Association in 1829; Yazoo Association in 1833; Choctaw Association in 1834; Yallobusha Association in 1836; with others later following including the Judson Association in 1853; and the Hobolochitto Association in 1856.

CHAPTER II

GOD SENT A MAN

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" - I Cor. 1:21.

Love for the souls of men; concern for their eternal welfare, has been the motivating force in the propagation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in every land and in every century. This is no less true in the spread of the Gospel and the founding of the first churches in our country and in our immediate area.

Marching under the orders of the great Biblical Commission given by Christ Himself, men in every century since the personal earthly ministry of the Saviour have hazarded their lives to carry the message of salvation and life to people of every nation and tongue.

The origin and development of the early churches in what is now Pearl River and Hancock Counties and surrounding territories to the east and west of Pearl River is likewise a story of men sent of God with a burning message and a mission to proclaim the glorious Gospel

of Jesus Christ.

Who knows how long and patiently some had waited and prayed for God to send among them a prophet-preacher-shepherd to teach them and lead them, and to establish a place of worship for themselves, their children, and their neighbors?

Sometime between 1835 and 1840 an itinerant Baptist missionary from around Osyka in Pike County, Mississippi, made his first mission journey on horseback east across Pearl River and down the historic Columbia-to-Gainesville road which followed along the high ground east of the river into that section of the country, most of which was then Hancock County. This zealous and courageous minister was Elder William Henry Varnado.

(The author will respectfully use the Biblical and historically familiar term "Elder" when referring to ministers of the gospel, since that term was almost exclusively used as a title or office of Baptist ministers in this country until about the close of the last century. In the Abstract History of the Mississippi Baptist Association, 1806-1906, an interesting note says: "Titles were not much in use among these early Baptists. They sometimes employed the term 'Elder,' but more generally all titles were left off." The term 'Elder', is generally accepted as being interchangeable with 'Pastor' or 'Bishop.' The term 'Reverend,' as a title for ministers among Baptists and Protestants is a result of Catholic influence in more recent times.)

It was due to the firm and aggressive leadership of W. H. Varnado that all the early Baptist churches in this area were established. From the time of his surrender to the ministry he actually lived to preach about 57 years in all.

Elder W. H. Varnado, "Uncle Billy," as he later became so affectionately known by the multitudes who knew him, was born in South Carolina, March 5, 1804. His parents were among many Baptist families who migrated from South Carolina into Mississippi to establish the first churches. The Varnadoes, like the family of Richard Curtis, Jr. and others who organized the the first Baptist church in Mississippi, were from among the descendants of the Welsh Baptists and Welsh Neck Baptist Church. He moved to Pike County with his parents by pack horses when he was only 5 years old, or about 1809.

In the History of Mississippi Baptist Preachers, by L. S. Foster, 1894, is found a biography of Brother Varnado by Elder Andrew M. Slaydon as follows:

"W. H. Varnado, a regular missionary Baptist preacher, was very active in the ministry forty-five years of his life. During the last eight years of his life he was not so active, by reason of infirmities of age, still he would preach and talk about the Bible as opportunity presented itself. He was loved and respected by all true Baptists. When he died

his church had his biography prepared, and recommended the Association to erect a monument at his grave, which was unanimously adopted by the Hobolochitto Association in October, 1893. He was born in South Carolina March 5, 1804; he died in Hancock County, Miss., July 28, 1893, and was buried by the side of his first wife, a large concourse of brethren and friends attending his burial. On the third Sunday in September, by urgent request, his funeral was preached by the writer (A. M. Slaydon), to a large audience."

"His parents, with William at the age of five years, moved to Pike County, Miss., in 1809, on pack horses, the lad was destined to be one of the pioneer preachers of South Mississippi. Here he grew up to manhood; here he married his first wife with whom he lived until all their children were grown, when the mother died. Some time later he was married to a lady of mature years and no children crowned the last marriage."

"At the age of thirty he professed religion and joined Mount Olive Baptist Church, Pike County, Miss. Very soon after he had impressions of duty to preach the gospel, and went into this work with determination, by God's help, to stick to it as long as he lived. With tears in his large blue eyes, and streaming down his cheeks, he would often say to the writer: 'Brother Slaydon, I was almost ready to give up when the Lord gave you to me to help me fight for Jesus and His Word; then I remembered God's promise and took fresh courage.' He would preach with great earnestness and vim, uncompromising in anything that would in the least injure the cause of truth. On the day of the writer's baptism, he remarked: 'We are now securing strength sufficient to fearlessly pounce upon any rotten doctrine which comes along.'

"He has often preached three hours at one time, and held the attention of his audience to the last word, who apparently desired to hear more from him."

"As preachers began to grow up - in the writer's early days the churches were very scarce - he would have them all attend the annual meetings in every church. In 1849 there were only three Baptist churches (Palestine, Bethel and Elim - LSW) in all that section, and Mr. Varnado was the instrument in God's hands in building them up."

"By order of the Mount Olive Baptist Church, Pike County, he was ordained to the full work of the ministry August 8, 1840, with Jesse Crawford and William Y. Sanford, and deacon William Simmons acting as presbytery. From his ordination until his death was fifty-three years, less twenty days. He, however, exercised in public some time before receiving a formal license, and after being licensed, preached a year or more, so that in all, he preached for sixty years - two generations. He is the father and grandfather of a large percent of the Bap-

tists of the Hobolochitto Baptist Association, numbering about twelve hundred members (in 1893 - LSW) beside of a large percent of other associations west. One grand trait was his constant and firm adherence to Bible principles. Nothing could move him from the faith once delivered to the saints. He took the Old Testament teachings as a past type, we may say, of the New Testament gospel, and every word said, or act performed, by our Saviour was essential in its place, and could not rightfully be overlooked or ignored by true and faithful followers of Jesus Christ. The writer once went to a meeting with him at his own church of six days duration. At the beginning of the meeting there were three Methodists to every two Baptists: at the conclusion there was only one Methodist left, and that was the preacher. It was in the days of slavery. The Methodist preacher had a woman slave, and she even joined the Baptists; the preacher himself being willing for her and all his flock to become Baptists. Many, yes, many, precious revivals has the writer passed with this faithful minister whose counsel he now so much misses, and whose absence he so much mourns. But why should we mourn? He has gone to his reward, where sickness, sin and sorrow are felt and feared no more. Brother, rest until we, the peers of angels, meet you in that better world above to part no more. Amen! -- A. M. Slaydon."

After a long, full and eventful ministry in which he was the chief instrument in God's hand in establishing most, if not all, the earliest Baptist churches along and far to the east and west of Pearl River in south Mississippi and southeast Louisiana, he passed on to await the resurrection at the age of 89 years and five months. He became a legend in his own right. He was buried in a small family cemetery near his old home place on the high hill on the east side of east Hobolochitto Creek east of what is now McNeill. Laid to rest by the side of his wife, Franky Zackery Varnado (1805 - 1880); his daughter, Emeline (1825-1904), and his son-in-law, Joshua Stockstill (1808-1900). Joshua Stockstill was a charter member of both (Old) Palestine and Union Baptist Churches.

Brother Varnado was a regular missionary Baptist preacher, noted in history as the first Baptist preacher in Hancock County which then included what is now most of Pearl River County and a part of Harrison County. An inscription on his tomb stone says he was . . . "The first Baptist preacher known to preach in Hancock County, Mississippi. The great missionary to this County, he was a Landmark Baptist, believing in and practice the washing of the Saints' feet as taught by our Lord.

"Now sweetly he sleeps here alone after 53 years labor in the Master's vineyard, entering the work at about 40 years of age, died in his 91st year but the Lord will raise him up at the last day."

Exactly how long preacher Varnado made the hazardous and toilsome trip back and forth to his home in Pike County prior to settling permanently in this area is not known for certain. Abstract History of Mississippi Baptists, 1806-1906, informs us that he attended the 1841 session of the old Mississippi Baptist Association as a messenger of Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church. It is believed that he was then serving the church as pastor with preaching services held once a month as was the custom at that time. The meeting was held that year with East Fork Baptist Church in Amite County.

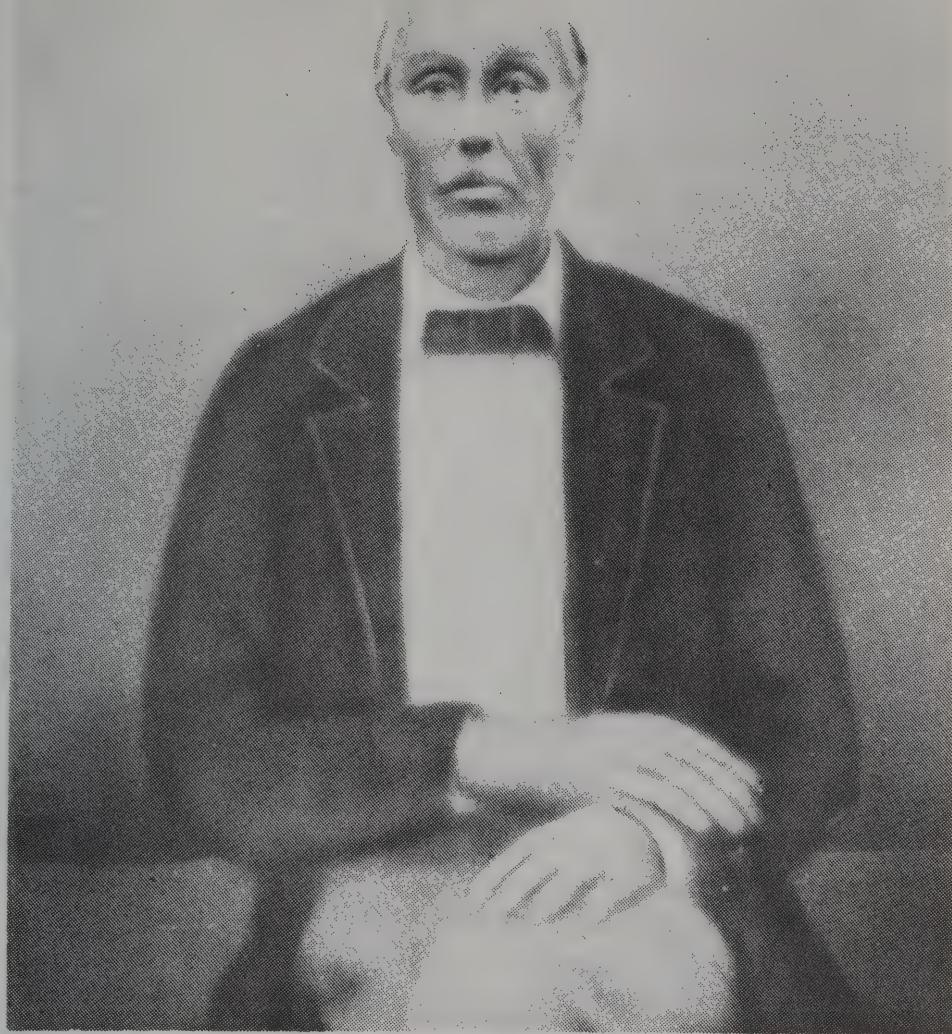
In L. S. Foster's book, Mississippi Baptist Preachers, Brother Varnado is described as one of the great doctrinal expositors of his era, with a persuasiveness and power in his preaching that would often hold the rapt attention of his audience as long as three hours at a time and the people desiring to hear more from the venerable man of God. His messages seemed to have been fresh from the Bible and straight from the Lord.

The loved and lamented Elder Hardy Smith (1838-1919) had the following to say about Bro. Varnado:

"Uncle Billy was the first Baptist minister to settle permanently in this locality. His very presence was a benediction. He was so congenial and condescending that no one could feel embarrassed in his presence. The most timid could easily approach him and be made to feel at home in his presence. This faithful man of God traversed the county to and fro in search of the lost. He could smile at his foes, but wept over sinners."

Thus we gain some insight of the character and statue of the man who was first to preach the gospel in this broad area of south Mississippi and southeast Louisiana - a man sent of God!

The thrilling history of the Lord's work in this area cannot be written without taking into account the labors of William H. Varnado. Great will be his reward. His life and labors live on in the lives and labors of the multitude of Baptist churches in the several associational fellowships of this area.



Elder William Henry Varnado (1804-1893), first missionary to old Hancock County and Gulf Coast area east of Pearl River, organizer and pastor of first churches, and first Moderator of Hobolochitto Baptist Association.

CHAPTER III

HANCOCK COUNTY AS IT WAS ABOUT 1840

Sometime during the latter half of the 18th century a trader named Stephen Jarrell traveling northward on the main Indian trail parallelling Pearl River, visited the Indian Village where Choctaw Chief Hobolo lived on the beautiful and strategically located high bluffs at the confluence of East and West Hobolochitto Creeks. Impressed with its location and beauty, Jarrell, according to legends, traded the chief a new French gun with a supply of ammunition and a pocket knife for the place. Here Jarrell established a trading post, and according to area historians, became the first permanent white settler in this large area of old Hancock County. The place was later acquired by the legendary Moses Cook who first visited the place as a quartermaster officer in the army of General Andrew Jackson on its march through the area on the way to New Orleans in the war of 1812. Cook returned about 1817 after being mustered out of the army to purchase the trading post from Jarrell. The first bridge on the old River Road from Columbia to Gainesville and Pearlington was constructed here in 1828. A charter was secured, and Hobolochitto became the area's first post office about 1830, though area historians differ on the exact date. Moses Cook lived out his life here where his grave marks his last resting place. He led in establishing Moses Cook Masonic Lodge in Gainesville (now in Picayune) in 1849. He was a promanent citizen and official in the early days of Hancock County. Historic Hobolochitto, now known as the "Hermitage" in northwest Picayune, is owned by the family of the late R. H. Crosby.

In 1812 the legislature of the Mississippi Territory had organized the newly added Gulf Coast region into Hancock and Jackson Counties. Hancock County included all of what is now Harrison County and about two thirds of what later was made Pearl River County. Harrison County was not organized by the legislature until 1841. Pearl River County was not finally established until 1890. The census of 1840 listed seven Post Offices in Hancock County. They were Shieldsboro (now Bay St. Louis), Hobolochitto, Pass Christian, Biloxi, Pearlington, Gainesville and Mississippi City. The first county seat, at old Center (Caesar) until 1836 (some say 1837), was now located at Gainesville, a rough, bustling frontier river town and trading center. The county seat was later re-located at Shieldsboro (Bay St. Louis) where it has since remained.

This area of the Mississippi Territory was still a part of the American frontier. There were relatively few settlers in all the wild country-side from Columbia to Gainesville, Pearlington and Shieldsboro. The nation was young - little more than sixty years since we had fought and won

the revolutionary war with England to become a free and independent nation by the providence of God. Mississippi had become the 20th state in the union December 10, 1817, only some 23 years earlier. Martin Van Buren was serving as the Nation's eighth president. Alexander G. McNutt was Governor of Mississippi. This was some 21 years prior to the war between the states. There were no improved roads. Only a few primitive trails. The crude but historic "Columbia-to-Gainesville" road was the only road shown on the map of this section of Mississippi in 1855. This old road and a few less identifiable trails were used by the new settlers and others who may pass through the dense piney woods and river swamps. With the exception of the rough timber bridge at Hobolochitto, there were no bridges spanning the various streams. For the most part they had to be forded or crossed by whatever means possible.

In 1840 there were still many Indians in the area, especially in the vicinity of old Center (Caesar), Devil's Swamp, and along the higher banks of the Hobolochitto Creek in the area of what is now north Picayune, along the bluffs of Pearl River and around what is now Poplarville. There were also some Negroes - some slaves, and others known as "free people of color" or "free Negroes." There were some roving bands of Marauders. There was an increasing number of small farmers, cattlemen, tradesmen, and some rum-runners. But for the most part the country was being settled by hard-working pioneer families - honest, God-fearing people mostly of Scotch and Irish stock about the business of living and rearing families in the Christian tradition.

Educational opportunities in old Hancock County and areas beyond were very limited before and for some time after 1840. There were very few public or private schools to be found. Most of the few established were one-teacher schools. The author was told by those before him that his great grandmother came to Hancock County from the region now known as Rankin and Simpson counties about 1817 or 1818 to teach school. She was the mother of George Washington Walker, Sr., the author's grandfather who was born in what is now north Picayune in 1820.

Most of those persons then living in what is now Pearl River County who had church affiliations were either Baptists or Methodists. Settlers of the Catholic religion were homesteading mostly in the areas of old Shieldboro, Pass Christian and Biloxi on the Gulf Coast. As far as this writer has been able to determine, there was no gospel preaching done in this section of the country before W. H. Varnado arrived. It is believed that a Methodist minister preached on occasions as early as 1842 at old Center (Caesar), Gainesville and Pearlington.

When preacher Varnado first came to this area in old Hancock County about 1840. there were no churches. The nearest establish-

ed church at that time was the old Half-Moon Bluff Baptist Church on Bogue Chitto River near Franklinton, Louisiana, organized October 12, 1812. A few historians contend that the organization was actually in 1811. Half-Moon Bluff, now known as Hay's Creek, was the first Baptist Church established in the State of Louisiana.

This tersely describes the kind of country William Henry Varnado found when he first arrived to preach the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ to who ever would listen.

It was by no means happenstance that Preacher Varnado, then about 35 or 36 years old, a young man in the very prime of life, hearing about this vast region being rather rapidly settled, with no churches, and no witness for Christ, was moved to come to this area as God's messenger. With the burden heavily upon his heart, he took his Bible in his hand, packed his saddle-bags, mounted his saddle horse, bid his loved one Godspeed, and rode away to the southeast, happy in the knowledge that he was in the will of God. The task would not be easy; neither was it easy for those in other places and other times before him.

He would have lots of time for prayer and reflection as he would spend many nights riding or resting under the star-studded canopies of the heavens; or through the days along the shadowed trails winding through the towering friendly pines which stood like guarding sentenals on the rolling hills and banks of the rivers and creeks; and occasionally with an accomodating family who would be obliged to help a man of God along his way.

Preaching services were held in the homes of friendly settlers, and at times out doors under the trees or a brush arbor and other such places as may be provided by those eager to hear the Word of God and share Christian fellowship. The preacher's efforts, for some time, were restricted mostly to an area along Pearl River, and the east and west branches of Hobolochitto Creek. Among the first families to join Brother Varnado in his mission efforts and share their home for services was the family of Thomas Jermiah Stockstill who had homesteaded a large tract of land on the old Columbia-to-Gainesville road near Pearl River southwest of where Picayune is now located. It is believed that regular montly preaching services were conducted in this home until the first church was established in 1842 in this community. Soon other preaching stations were established at Yamacraw, Caesar, Gainesville, Henleyfield and other communities. Brother Varnado soon had more preaching appointments than he could attend to. This brought on talk and plans of organizing churches which followed in the years ahead.

Brother Varnado, it was said, had developed into a dynamic preacher. His dedication to his labors were proving fruitful. The form of things to come for the people of this area was clearly taking shape;

and the towering shadow and influence of W. H. Varnado lay indelibly across the scene.

"Lives of great men all remind us - Our lives, too, can be sublime and, departing, leave behind us footprints on the sands of time."

--Henry W. Longfellow.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST CHURCHES

Palestine - 1842

The first Baptist church established in old Hancock County was Palestine. Since 1898 it has been known as Old Palestine. A group split away from the old church in 1898 and organized a new church several miles to the north. The new church was named New Palestine.

Unfortunately, all the earliest records of the old church have been lost. According to Leavell and Bailey in their book, A Complete History of Mississippi Baptists, published 1904, Palestine was formally organized 1842 with seven charter members by Elders W. H. Varnado and Calvin Magee.

Elder Calvin Magee is listed on several occasions in the minutes for the years 1842, 1843, 1844, and the years followig as a visiting minister to the Mississippi Baptist Association from the Mississippi River, or the Pearl River Associations. He preached during the session of the old Mississippi Baptist Association of 1846 at Mount Zion Church in Franklin County. He came on several subsequent occasions to assist Bro. Varnado in organizing churches in this area.

To the family of Thomas Jeremiah Stockstill goes the distinct honor of hosting the meeting for the organization of Palestine, the first church in Hancock County and a large surrounding area of south Mississippi. Those who lived during earlier years, members and descendants of members before them, told us that regular monthly "preaching services" were conducted in this good home for some time prior to the church's organization. The following charter members, it is said, constituted the church: Thomas J. Stockstill and wife, Joshua Stockstill and wife, John Penton and wife, and William H. Varnado.

Services were held regularly on a once-a-month schedule until land was acquired, cleared, and a house of worship erected by the men members and their neighbors.

Left to their resources, the members of Palestine Church succeeded in erecting a house of worship suitable to their needs and times. It

has been fondly described as being a rustic structure of modest proportions and starkly simple in its appointments. It was somewhat typical of the early meeting houses on the frontier, with no ceiling inside. The seating consisted of puncheon benches of logs hewn flat on one side with holes bored into the under side permitting the legs to be firmly inserted. The building stood near the old Columbia-to-Gainesville road west of what is now Nicholson. The present modern house of worship stands on the Nicholson-to-Jackson Landing road not far from where the first building stood so long. Older members have told us that the present neat brick structure is the fourth building in 137 years since the founding of the church.

The rustic structure was minutely described to the author in 1942, the one hundredth anniversary of the church, by "Uncle 'Fiddlin' Jimmy" Stockstill and Eld. Walter A. Burks. Both were members of Old Palestine. More recently this description was confirmed by Mrs. Letha Slaydon Thigpen, a life-long member of the old church. She could clearly recall attending worship services when a young girl in the old log house. These and others recalled that it was a large structure for that day and time - about 50 feet long and some 30 or more feet wide - built of long well-selected heart pine logs skillfully notched and pegged together at the corners. It was a single inclosure facing northeast with a double doors front entrance. Rough board shutters covered the six window openings - two on the front, two on the west side, and two on the back. There was a door toward the rear of the building on the east side. Rough sawed boards and batten fastened straight up and down covered the logs outside to keep the weather out. The roof was of rough cypress boards riven by hand. The foundation was of large hand-hewn timbers sills resting on blocks. The building was not painted. Being of solid heart pine and cypress, it actually needed none.

The structure served the congregation as a place of worship for some sixty years, or from 1842 or 1843 until about 1902 or 1903 when a second building was erected a short distance to the southeast. The old building stood there many years after it was abandoned, as a silent reminder of bygone days, and the end of an era.

Thadeus B. Mitchell, it is believed, was the first person baptized into the fellowship of Palestine Church. He was, therefore, the first person to be baptized in all of old Hancock County. It has also been noted, according to descendants of early church members, that Sarah Isabelle, daughter of Thomas Jeremiah Stockstill, was the second baptismal candidate baptized into Palestine church. The near-by peaceful Pearl River was the scene of the solemn and historic ceremony.

After some years had passed, the untiring labors of Bro. Varnado and his small congregation was again rewarded in a revival which

broke out at Palestine in 1855 during the September revival meeting. Fourteen willing converts were added by experience and baptism. Among them were Andrew M. Slaydon and Hardy A. Smith. Both of these men became outstanding ministers of this area. Brother Hardy Smith wrote of another such revival which came the following year: "The next year, 1856, Palestine was blessed with another outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Over twenty persons united with us by experience. Brother Varnado had the pleasure of baptizing seventeen, nearly all grown men, in Pearl River which was the grandest sight I had ever before seen."

BETHEL - 1846

The second church was Bethel. The old Bethel Baptist Church was organized about 1846 according to the notes of Elder Hardy A. Smith on the early history of the Hobolochitto Baptist Association. It was believed located on the old Columbia-to-Gainesville river road just to the north of the present Bethel Baptist Church in what is now the Buck Branch community. The post office address was Riceville. The church was, like Palestine, organized by W. H. Varnado and Calvin Magee. The church ceased to exist after about twenty years or soon after the "civil war." Not much is known about its history. Another church by the same name was organized near by a few years later.

ELIM - 1846-1847

It is believed that Elim, sometimes spelled Elem, was the third church constituted about 1846 or 1847 through the labors of Eld. W. H. Varnado. It is not certain who may have assisted him. It was constituted with 14 charter members, some of whom were blacks. As was probably the case with old Bethel, the hardships of reconstruction which followed the war between the states had taken its toll. Old Elim decided to desolve and grant letters to the members to the churches most convenient to them.

A note in the minutes of the Hobolochitto Association of 1874 says: "Elim church, Bay St. Louis, petitioned the Association to send them a missionary to labor with them and assist them." W. A. Whitfield was the church's messenger to the meeting. The church, after previous desolution, had apparently been re-constituted, and was struggling under great difficulty to exist. Nothing further appears in the minutes of the association about the church.

UNION - 1852

Union Baptist Church at Caesar was organized in 1852 by Elders W. H. Varnado and P. P. Bowen just ten years after Palestine, the first church, was constituted. Union was the fourth church established in this area. A Methodist minister had conducted preaching services at Caesar from time to time since the early 1840's. The dynamic doctrinal and evangelistic preaching of W. H. Varnado soon overcame the Methodist influence. The Methodists soon discontinued further efforts, and Union Baptist Church was organized formally with the following charter members: Mr. and Mrs. Freeman Jones, Mr. and Mrs. Madison Holcomb, Mr. and Mrs. Noah Stanford; Mr. and Mrs. Charles Frazier, Joshua Stockstill, and H. L. Pearson. Joshua Stockstill was a charter member of Palestine and Union churhces. He was the first deacon of Union Church.

Preacher Varnado, Joshua Stockstill; Madison Holcomb, H. L. Pearson and Freeman Jones, with the help of some Indians and a few blacks in the community, set to work to build a house of worship. Like most buildings of that time, it was a log structure, small and simple in its appointments. Earlier historians tell us that blocks of wood were used for seats for some time. The strong spiritual atmosphere, the dynamic spirit, and the spacious and imposing church plant of Union Church today, stands as a testimony to the faith and Christian character of those who have been a part of this great rural church over the past 127 years. Of the five churches remaining of the eight established by 1856, Union is by far the strongest. It is truly one of the great church congregations of south Mlssissippi.

GAINESVILLE - 1855

The old Gainesville Baptist Church was organized at Gainesville in 1855. Most of the old records of this church were lost long ago. The church was, like others of its time and before, established under the influence and dynamic leadership of W. H. Varnado. Andrew M. Slaydon, converted and baptized under the ministry of W. H. Varnado at Palestine Church, was among the first to preach, along with Bro. Varnado at Gainesville. Andrew M. Slaydon was the first minister of the gospel ever ordained in old Hancock County. He was ordained about a year after the organization of the Gainesville church.

It is not known for sure if the church ever erected a building of her own at Gainesville. Some think the congregation shared the Moses Cook Masonic Lodge building, then at Gainesville, until the church was relocated on Turtleskin Creek a few miles to the north in 1888, when the church changed its name to Corinth.

Moses Cook Lodge – 111, F. & A. M. was charted under dispensation of the Grand Lodge of Mississippi February 5, 1849. Eld. Andrew M. Slaydon was a prominent member of Moses Cook until his death. In the years which followed he was elected Worshipful Master of the lodge fourteen times. The only man to serve as Master of Moses Cook Lodge longer than did A. M. Slaydon, was Luther B. Walker, the author's father, who was chosen Master 22 times. Many of the old churches of this area, as well as in other parts of the country, shared buildings with Masonic Lodges in past years.

Corinth church historians tell of a small log house of worship built on Turtleskin Creek which served the congregation till 1893, when a third building was erected. A fourth building was constructed in 1949. This building accommodated them well for both comfort and growth. Establishment of the NASA Test Site (now NSTL) in the early 1960's forced the church to relocate. The congregation's fifth church home is located at Nicholson where they have worshipped since 1965.

JUNIPER GROVE - 1855

Juniper Grove Baptist Church was constituted in 1855. Old records of the famous old church were lost through the ravages of time, wars, depressions, and human indifference. Those who composed the charter membership are not known for certain. The church, it is said, came into being as the result of destitution labors of Eld. W. H. Varnado and others who helped him in the mission work from time to time. It was formally organized in a small log school house near Juniper Swamp southeast of where the town of Poplarville now is. Varnado and A. M. Slaydon were among the first ministers to Juniper Grove, church historians say.

The famed and strikingly handsome house of worship now stands at the old church site near the old Bilbo family home site, the boyhood home of former Governor and United States Senator Theodore Gilmore Bilbo, who fondly called it "the little brown church in the wildwood." He spent the greater part of his financial earnings of his last years toward completion of the church building and his beloved "Dream House" home which was sold after his death, and later lost in a fire which completely consumed the stately old south colonial mansion. The lovely church building stands to enhance one of the many picturesque scenes of south Mississippi today. there it casts its quiet and peaceful shadow across the lettered memorials of friends and loved ones who rest in Jesus due to the gospel message she faithfully proclaimed.

ZION HILL - 1856

Zion Hill Baptist Church was organized early in the year 1856. The Hobolochitto Baptist Association was organized in September of the same year. Like most of the other older churches, the historical records of Zion Hill are very scarce. Older people native to this area told this writer many years ago that the first small house of worship stood near where the Henleyfield First Baptist Church presently stands. The church was organized in this community under the leadership of W. H. Varnado and A. M. Slaydon. Henleyfield community was among several preaching stations established in this area of old Hancock County. The Hobolochitto Association minutes show that Zion Hill Church Post Office was Pinetucky until about 1866. About this time, or soon thereafter, the church moved to a location just to the north of what is now the town of McNeill. Later it was relocated at the present location east of McNeill.

SALEM -1856

Salem was the last of eight early churches to be constituted before the Fall of 1856. Some historians think it may not have been organized until early 1857. This can hardly be true since the church was represented for the organization of the Hobolochitto Association in September, 1856. Salem Church was located somewhere in south central Hancock County. The Church's Post office address was Gainesville. It was a victim of the war between the states and its aftermath, the harsh and nefarious reconstruction period. After only about fifteen or so years labor in the Master's vineyard, old Salem was desolved and received into the membership of Palestine. The beloved Eld. Hardy Smith says that Salem was organized chiefly through the labors of A. M. Slaydon prior to and after his ordination.

CHAPTER V

HOBOLOCHITTO ASSOCIATION ORGANIZED

In the historic tradition of the Baptists in past centuries, the young churches of old Hancock County thought it wise and prudent to further their common cause by forming a cooperative fellowship which Baptists have chosen to call an association. Such an association to be the servant of the churches, and not the other way around. Being free and autonomous does not justify the folly of isolationism. New Testament churches from the first century had worked and walked together to more expeditiously and effectively achieve their common goals. Each church, of its own volition, would elect and send representative

messengers to deliberate and perfect such an organization. Realizing there is strength in unity, Baptist churches have cooperated as absolute equals in some associational capacity since the first century.

There are numerous Biblical examples of the churches, of their own volition, working together to achieve common goals - Acts 14:24-28; 15:1-30 and 20:1-4. Quite obviously there was in effect such an association of churches in Macedonia; as there was in Judea, and in Galatia! Paul speaks of the churches (plural) of Macedonia in II Cor. 8:1. In verses 18-19 of the same chapter: "And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout ALL THE CHURCHES: and not that only, but who was also CHOSEN OF THE CHURCHES to travel with us with this grace, which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord, and declaration of your ready mind."

In his message to the church at Corinth, Paul spoke of "taking wages" of "other churches" to do them service. He received financial support - "wages" if you please, from OTHER CHURCHES, in an associational or cooperative capacity to preach the gospel to the Corinthians. This was clearly a united, cooperative or associational joint effort on the part of several independent churches. It was, for all practical purposes, an associated work. In II Cor. 8:23, Paul says: "Whether any do inquire of Titus, . . . or our brethren, . . . they are the MESSENGERS OF THE CHURCHES, and the glory of Christ."

Davis' History of the Welsh Baptists tells of an Association of Baptist Churches long before the Protestant Reformation. Armitage, Benedict and other historians tell of Association of Baptist Churches in England prior to the Reformation. The first Baptist Association in America was the Philadelphia Association organized in 1707. Many other Associations of Churches were formed through the following years in New England and the old South. The old Mississippi Baptist Association was organized in September, 1806. Others soon followed in Mississippi. These included the Union, Pearl River, Leaf River, Yazoo, Buttahatchie, Choctaw, Bethel, Judson and the Hobolochitto.

Elder W. H. Varnado had worked briefly with the old Mississippi Association prior to coming into southeast Louisiana and the coastal area of south Mississippi. All those early pioneer preachers and churches were committed to the principle of associational work among the churches where possible.

In a meeting sometime early in the year of 1856 with the Bethel Church at Riceville, a decision was made to ask all the churches to elect and send messengers to a meeting at Palestine Church for the purpose of organizing an Association.

In September, 1856, seven of the eight churches east of the south reach of Pearl River sent messengers to the meeting at Palestine with instructions to organize an association. The meeting was called to order by Eld. W. H. Varnado, pastor of Palestine. All church

messengers were recognized and seated. The formal organization resulted in the election of W. H. Varnado as moderator, and A. M. Slaydon as clerk.

Churches constituting the new Association were Palestine, Bethel, Elim, Union, Gainesville, Zion Hill and Salem. Juniper Grove was not represented for the Association's formative session. The church had represented at least one year with the old Pearl River Association to the north. It came into the Hobolochitto the following year. The churches at Union and Gainesville represented in the old East Louisiana Association briefly prior to the organization of the Hobolochitto.

Palestine had been the mother of the work. It was the oldest and largest of the churches. These courageous saints of God were "on the mountain top." They felt that a new day had dawned for them. Great progress was being realized. It had now been some sixteen years since preacher Varnado, with the Word of God in his hand and a burden for souls in his heart, had first rode horseback into this new mission field about 1840. It had been fourteen years since the organization of Palestine, the first church, in 1842. While the way had been beset with trials and tears, they now felt a most gratifying sense of triumph. It was as though they had reached another milestone in a march of progress.

Feeling now that they were bound together by common ties and objectives, they were ready to press against all enemies of Christ. By the grace of God they had taken their place along with the other Baptist Associations, advancing in all directions across the State of Mississippi and regions beyond, as LABORERS TOGETHER WITH GOD.

They found out early, and let us hope it will be remembered long, the wisdom of working together. As Dr. W. J. Burgess, for eighteen years secretary of missions for the churches of the Baptist Missionary Association of America, and my revered friend, has so often said: "Cooperation is the soul of progress."



Old Palestine Baptist Church, Nicholson, Mississippi, organized in 1842.

CHAPTER VI

THE LORD SENDS HELP

Until about 1856, Eld. W. H. Varnado had labored in this vast and sparsely populated area almost alone, as far as ministerial help was concerned. On occasions he had been assisted in the work by Elders Calvin Magee from the Salem church in Pike County, and E. W. Moore.

Obviously, preacher Varnado felt the Lord was answering his prayers, as well as those of the struggling little churches, when Andrew M. Slaydon, a member of Palestine church, made known his calling to preach the gospel.

Andrew Slaydon was the first minister ever to be formally licensed and ordained in the entire area of old Hancock County and miles beyond.

Excerpts from the biography of A. M. Slaydon in L. S. Foster's book, "Mississippi Baptist Preachers," published in 1894, the follow-

ing is noted:

A. M. Slaydon was born in Texas, September 15, 1826. His father, a Virginian, was a professional dancing master and never made any profession of faith. His mother was Miss Mary Bell, and was raised in Louisiana on or near Bell's Island, west of New Orleans. She was a Methodist. The son remained at home until he was twenty-two years of age, under her religious training. None of his relations on either side, so far as known to him were Baptists, and none were preachers. He was raised in Texas and southwest Louisiana with only seven weeks of school training, his faather being a poor man and often moved. The dear old mother would read for the children and try to instruct them the best she could, and teach them to be good boys and girls, join the church and be Christians, after the manner of her church training and the theory of her ministers. He loved his mother, but fell into his father's habits, leaving his mother's counsel, sought social mirth with eagerness. He fell into vices and crime which filled him with pain."

After some six or seven years he came to Hancock County, Mississippi, here he married and "tried to get religion and settle down." He became convicted and deeply burdened about his condition, he said.

After attending preaching services whenever and wherever he had opportunity for some time, he found himself burdened with great conviction. In a meeting at Palestine Church in September, 1855, he went forward to give public testimony of his experience of salvation. Happy in his new found experience of saving grace, he followed the Lord in baptism into the fellowship of Palestine Church. "Tongue cannot express my feelings," he said, "one thing I know, I love God, and the people of God."

One week later Mr. Slaydon began to "exercise in public" and was licensed to preach in early 1856. Nine months later he was ordained to the full work of the ministry, the presbytery being W. H. Varnado and E. W. Moore. He did a great deal of preaching and a number were saved under his preaching before he was ordained. He began preaching in a Catholic community in the early part of 1856, where a church was organized with twenty-seven members. The new church experienced, what was then considered, a good growth under his ministry for the next two years. This was believed to have been the Salem church which was desolved a few years after the Civil War. Brother Slaydon was succeeded a few years later by Thaddeus B. Mitchell, who in turn, was followed as pastor there by R. R. Breland.

Feeling that he was poorly qualified for the work he was called to do; having extremely little formal education, Mr. Slaydon, it was said, went to his library - a Webster's Spelling Book, Walker's Primary Dic-

tionary and a family Testament - with God as teacher, pine-knot fire for a light, and a burning zeal in his heart, he studied at night. In this way he developed a reading skill which served him profoundly through a long ministry. He became a dynamic preacher, an influential church and community leader. He led many to Christ, baptizing hundreds. He was known as an able defender of the faith, an un-compromising exponent of the historic Baptist principles and practices.

Brother Hardy Smith, who was baptized in Pearl River the same time Bro. Slaydon was, said, "For many years of his ministry he preached regularly to four and sometimes five churches, and they all prospered."

Like other minister of his time, Brother Slaydon, received very little financial remuneration from the small congregations he served.

Brother Smith described A. M. Slaydon as being an energetic, frugal and determined Christian citizen. Once successful in merchandising, later he owned and operated a saw mill. He wanted to make money to help build churches in the country. He gave liberally to the churches. He taught the churches to give generously, but never to give grudgingly.

Brother Smith told of seeing Brother Slaydon baptize several Roman Catholics, one or two Latter Day Saints (Mormans), several Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Campbellites, and many Methodists.

Many Methodists would become angry, it was said, when Bro. Slaydon would preach on baptism and church polity. He was often assailed by Methodist preachers who gave him a "tongue lashing for preaching the true doctrines of the Bible in their presence." He was once "waited on" by a Methodist committee who told him he could not preach in a Union House which he and other Baptists had helped to build. Slaydon retorted that he intended to preach, if not inside the house, then he would preach on the outside. He was then invited back into the house. One of the committee was baptized, and the others acknowledged that what he preached "was the way of truth."

MEANT WHAT HE SAID, AND SAID WHAT HE MEANT!

There was no doubt in the minds of those pioneer saints that A. M. Slaydon had "come to the kingdom for such a time as this." He knew where he stood on issues. He had no trouble making clear his position when a principle was involved. He was an outstanding citizen. His indomitable spirit; his burning zeal; his dynamic and un-compromising preaching, was a powerful influence in shaping the spiritual and moral character of this section of our country.

After some 42 years preaching among the churches of the

Hobolochitto Baptist Association, he passed from his labors here to rest with the Lord there. Memorial services were conducted with appropriate ceremonies including masonic rites in the presence of a host of relatives, friends and acquaintances in attendance. His remains rest in Cedar Grove cemetery east of Nicholson by the side of his wife, Caroline Mitchell Slaydon.

Other pioneer ministers ordained by the churches of the Hobolochitto Association in the late 1850's and early 1860's were Reuben R. Breland, Thaddeus Behuskis Mitchell and Roland E. Burks, who with Slaydon, lent great impetus to the work of the little association of churches.

REUBEN R. BRELAND came with his family to this area in the early 1850's. Originally, a Methodist, it seemed providential that he was brought under the powerful doctrinal preaching of W. H. Varnado, converted to the Baptist faith and baptized into the fellowship of Union Baptist Church. He soon felt and made known his calling to preach the gospel; and subsequently licensed and later ordained by the church in 1857. Like the other missionary preachers of his time, he had to make his living aside from the meager support from the small churhces he served. He operated a community grist mill on Catahoula Creek. However, riding horse-back and at times walking, he was busily engaged with regular preaching appointments. He was the second pastor of Union Chruch, succeeding the venerable W. H. Varnado. He died in 1870 after a brief but eventful ministry.

THADDEUS B. MITCHELL, was the first convert baptized in old Hancock County by W. H. Varnado into the fellowship of Palestine Baptist Church in 1842, surrendered to the gospel ministry about 1858 or 1859, and was licensed by his church.

Thaddeus Mitchell was born July 15, 1824. He grew up in this area and made known his calling to preach when he was 36 years of age. A simple inscription on his tomb in Old Palestine cemetery west of Nicholson, says: "Ordained a regular Baptist minister September 24, 1860."

According to the biography of A. M. Slaydon in L. S. Foster's book, "Mississippi Baptist Preachers," Thaddeus B. Mitchell was ordained by the old Salem Baptist Church where he succeeded Slaydon as the second pastor about 1859. He lived to preach the un-searchable riches of Jesus Christ to many people in churches and mission points throughout the area for some 35 years. About 1882 he was instrumental in establishing the old Antioch Baptist Church on the south bank of Hobolochitto Creek, to become the first church ever constituted in what is now the city of Picayune. He passed on to be with the Lord on March 2, 1895, after more than 35 years in the ministry. his faithful wife Sarah Isabelle Stockstill, followed him in death

September 24 (the anniversary of his ordination), 1898. She was buried by his side in Old Palestine cemetery.

A story found in the old "Poplarville Free Press" says that Thad B. Mitchell was the first homesteader in the area of what was originally known as Picayune.

ROLAND E. BURKS, "Uncle Rol," as he was so affectionately known in his later days, was the fourth Baptist minister ordained to the work of the gospel ministry in the area of old Hancock County. In his familiar resonant baritone voice, he proclaimed the message of God's love and salvation with fervent devotion for more than fifty years.

Born May 12, 1835, he was the son of Daniel and Jane (Smith) Burks, pioneer settlers in old Hancock County. Roland Burks was a brother of this writer's paternal grandmother, Margaret "Peggy" Burks, the wife of George Washington Walker. Roland Burks fought with the Army of the Confederacy in the Civil War in 1861-1864. He was married to Rebecca Cooper. He died August 17, 1923. His dear wife passed on to be with him just seven months later, March 25, 1924. Simple headstones mark their resting place in New Palestine Cemetery west of Picayune.

CHAPTER VII

THE FORMATIVE YEARS: 1856-1866

Following the organization of the Hobolochitto Baptist Association at Palestine Church in September, 1856, the eight small churches scattered throughout Hancock and south Marion Counties evidenced a common spirit of revival, moving forward with new zeal and courage. Lifting up their eyes to look on the harvest-ripe fields of opportunity now before them, their vision now encompassed a broader horizon. Many of the hardships of earlier years now behind them, the trials; the tears; and the triumphs of those past experiences seemed to bind them together in a richer and closer relationship.

In 1856, just fourteen years after its formal organization, Palestine was numerically the strongest congregation, with 78 members. Union had 59; Juniper Grove had 36; Bethel had 24; Zion Hill, 22; Gainesville, 18; Salem, 17; and Elim had 12. These making a total of 266 members in the eight churches.

Other than a small concentration of Roman Catholics in the Bay St. Louis (old Shieldsboro) area, and Byrd's Chapel Methodist just south of Chinquapin Creek on the old River Road, the Baptists had the only churches in this broad section of the country. They surely felt that God had planted them with His own right hand.

No minutes of the Association's proceedings were printed before 1860. Prior to that time they were handwritten and kept by the clerk.

As has been previously noted, the 1856 formative session of the Association was convened with Palestine. The 1857 annual session was held with Union Church at Caesar. Eld. W. H. Varnado was again elected moderator, Eld. A. M. Slaydon, clerk. Brother Varnado preached the introductory sermon.

The 1858 session of the Association was convened at Gainesville; and the 1859 session with Zion Hill. Varnado and Slaydon were re-elected as moderator and clerk respectively for both sessions. It is not known for certain just where the 1860 and 1861 meetings were convened. Brethren Varnado and Slaydon were again chosen both years as moderator and clerk respectively. The records do show for the year 1860 that all eight churches were represented by letter and messengers. The letters showed a total of 40 additions - 20 on profession of faith and baptism, and 20 by letters from other churhces. The letters also showed a total of 233 members in all the churches - 221 whites and 12 blacks.

All the churches were represented again in 1861. Letters from the churches to the Association showed only 8 baptisms - an average of one per church for the year. Eld. Thaddeus B. Mitchell brought the "introductory" message. Varnado and Slaydon again elected moderator and clerk.

The tragic conflict, misnamed the "Civil War," had begun. With most of our young men gone to fight in defense of the Confederacy, the hardships of the struggle were having an adverse effect upon the churches. It finally meant the desolution of some.

In the fall of 1862 the churches sent their messengers to meet with Palestine, the mother church. All eight churches represented. Effects of the war were evidenced by the fact that only seven messengers constituted the body. Obviously, at least one church was represented by letter only. Eld. W. H. Varnado again elected moderator; Eld. A. M. Slaydon, clerk; and Mr. Freeman Jones, treasurer. W. H. Varnado, according to previous arrangement the year before, brought the annual introductory sermon from John 10:16.

The annual associational meetings in those days were always of at least three days duration, and, as the custom was, there would be from four to five, sometimes six or seven sermons during the meetings - some in the meeting house, and some outside at the "stand." Those pioneer Christians were not "gospel hardened" as so many are today. The preachers enjoyed preaching, and the people enjoyed hearing them.

Reports from the churches revealed that very few souls had been won and received into their fellowship for the past church year. Only six baptisms and nine received by transfer of letters. The churches were decreasing in membership. Total membership of all the chur-

ches was only 127 - 164 whites and eight blacks. A bit of pathos is sensed in the closing statement of the minutes of the proceedings of the 1862 session: "Our little session passed off with harmony and love, . . . we humbly trust that God will bless our little assiciation."

The horrors and hardships of war were now having a devastating effect upon the people of Mississippi and all the Confederacy. Over 70,000 men from Mississippi had taken up arms in defense of the Confederate States and the principles they firmly believed to be just. The war between the states had been raging since early 1861. Many young men from this area, and from the churches of the area, had gone to fight. Marauding bands of looters, lawless freed slaves, carpetbaggers and scalawags made life extremely difficult for those left to keep home life going and to attend the farms. Let it be said, however, that among the most devoted and loyal friends of suffering southern people were some of their former slaves and other blacks.

A resolution in the 1862 minutes of the proceedings ordered the clerk to have 125 copies of the minutes printed for distribution among the churches. This practice has been profitably and wisely continued to the present time.

The war continued to take its toll. Only six churches represented at the 1863 session held with Union Church at Caesar. Same officers as previous year elected. Eld. Reuben R. Breland delivered the introductory message. Others elected at the meeting to preach during the three day session. The annual associational meetings had already developed a public image of being occasions of rich and invigorating fellowship. There was, of course, the business of the churches of missions, evangelism, teaching and stewardship. There was also lots of powerful preaching, hymn singing, inspiring prayers, where the saints sometimes shouted and thrilled in the awareness of God's Holy Presence.

The people of the host church and communitiy always made plain, simple, but ample preparations for these meetings. Those attending the meetings came on horse-back, by horse and buggy, a few came on foot. There was always plenty of good wholesome food in readiness. Often a beef would be butchered and prepared for the occasion. Dinner brought to the church grounds and spread picnic style for all to share with great delight and thanksgiving was a common sight. Lodging was provided at the homes for everyone. Women and children slept in the beds in the homes. If there were not enough beds, pallets were spread about the floor. The men folk happily made their way to the cotton sheds, hay lofts, or other buildings about the farms. They seemed to enjoy every minute of it. They laughed and exchanged stories, discussed the scriptures and told of news happenings their friends may not have heard about. It was good fellowship of a kind this country sorely needs again.

The story is told of a dear old Methodist brother who lived in the community where the annual session of the Baptist Association was meeting in those days. He offered, like his neighbors, to help lodge and feed the messengers and visitors. He hastened to inform the host pastor that he had only one extra bed; but, he explained: that should be no problem; as narrow as most Baptists are known to be, six or seven should sleep comfortably in that one bed.

The 1864 session was held with Bethel Church at Riceville on the river road in lower Marion County just north of where the present Bethel Baptist Church in Buck Branch community is located.

BOGALUSA'S FIRST CHURCH REPRESENTS

Union Baptist Church at old Pool's Bluff in Washington Parish, Louisiana, sent messengers to represent them at the meeting in 1864 to become the first of a number of southeast Louisiana churches to petition the Hobolochitto for fellowship. Union Church, organized in 1855, was the first church established in the eastern part of Washington Parish and what was later to become the City of Bogalusa. A few excerpts from the "History of Union Avenue Baptist Church" in Bogalusa compiled on the occasion of the church's one hundredth anniversary in 1955 is interesting reading.

"The Union Avenue Baptist Church was organized in 1855 in a log house at Pool's Bluff, that was used for both Church and School, about three miles south of (what is now) Bogalusa, with eleven charter members. . . .The first regular pastor was Joseph C. "Joe" Seal, the second one Eld. W. H. "Bill" Adams. After the Civil War the church was moved from Pool's Bluff to a location where the City of Bogalusa now stands. Bogalusa was not incorporated until 1914. After two other locations in the area, it was moved to what is generally referred to as Adamstown in 1913, where it is now located. Under the pastorate of Elder Bill Adams, who had the oversight of the church for many years, there was a place in the church for colored people. A large number of them were won to Christ and baptized. Hence, the church is not only the mother and grandmother of all the white churches in this vicinity, but of the colored churches also."

The charter members of old Union Baptist Church, now called Union Avenue, are : Bill Adams, Nicklous Adams, Lucinda Adams, Roy Pierce, Julia Pierce, Warren Richardson, Fannie Richardson, Sherman Adams, Elisha Adams, Kenck Adams and Mattie Adams.

The church lists the following twenty-four pastors from 1855 to 1978: Joseph C. "Joe" Seal, W. H. "Bill" Adams, Washington Tolar, Edwin Bilbo, Milton A. Sheppard, Raleigh Schillings, Andrew M. "Andy" Slaydon, T. E. Bennett, George Reivere, T. E. Bennett (a second

time), J. P. Hemby, S. C. Hammock, John W. Duggar, M. W. Melton, M. F. Downing, J. E. Hollingsworth, Jr., Weeks Dubose, Carl Garnett, John Hayden, Julius Carter and Thomas H. Stapleton.

A historic plaque placed in front of the church on Union Avenue, named for the old church, by the Louisiana Department of Industry and Commerce, says: "The original log church building housed the first school in the area now known as Bogalusa." Thus we see how the Hobolochitto Association was influencing the progress as well as the shape of history in Washington Parish and the Bogalusa area.

It is only fair to note here that this grand old church has stood firmly through the years against the attempted inroads . . . and encroachments of modern "Conventionism" and other known religious innovations. The church cooperates, as it has for many years, in the home and foreign missions work of Association Baptists.

Eld. A. M. Slaydon brought the introductory message for the 1864 session at Bethel. Varnado and Slaydon were again chosen moderator and clerk respectively.

The 1865 session met with Union Church in Washington Parish, Louisiana, September 30th and October 1st and 2nd. Eld. J. E. Pounds preached the introductory sermon. This session saw the first change in the positions of moderator and clerk since the organization of the Association at Palestine in 1856. Mr. Freeman Jones was elected moderator, and Mr. W. F. Elliott, clerk. This was to be the first of many future associational meetings to come with churches in Louisiana. Two new churches petitioned the body for fellowship. They were Mount Olive and Bonner Creek, both in Washington Parish. The messengers were accordingly received, and the moderator gave them the right hand of fellowship on behalf of the body.

The Mount Olive Church, Sunny Hill, Washington Parish, Louisiana, was host to the next annual session October 6-8, 1866. Mount Olive is located a short distance from Franklinton. Eld. Joseph C. Seal preached the introductory sermon from Luke 12:32. Eld. Joseph C. Seal, an outstanding minister of his time, is the great-grandfather of Eld. Carl W. Seal, beloved pastor of churches in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Oklahoma and Arkansas. He is presently the pastor of Paramount Baptist Church near Wiggins, Mississippi.

Eld. W. H. Varnado was chosen again as moderator; T. J. Simmons, clerk; and A. Harvey, treasurer.

Petitionary letters were called for and two churches presented petitions for fellowship. They were Pine Grove (at Yamacraw), Hancock County, Mississippi; and Enon Church, Washington Parish, Louisiana. Messengers from Pine Grove were T. J. Seale and T. H. Nixon.

According to Brother Otis Seal, a native of Pearl River County, and esteemed Mississippi pastor, in his history of Pine Grove Church,

"103 Years of Trial and Triumph," Pine Grove was organized 1865. This old church has nurtured some of this area's best citizens of the past 114 years. This writer's father, mother and many other relatives and friends were members of Pine Grove.

Pine Grove's pastors through the years include W. H. Varnado, A. M. Slaydon, Thad B. Mitchell, W. W. Mitchell, T. B. Fortenberry, J. G. Sibley, J. Tom Dale, W. I. Williams, N. F. Clark, J. P. Culpepper, Horatio Mitchell, W. L. Holcombe, U. K. Perege, C. L. Bullard, E. F. Haight, E. Y. Soileau, Cecil O. Sewell, Olen Q. Harmon, Harry F. Jones, Robert L. Jordan, B. G. Crabb, George Palmer, James Smith and W. A. Vail.

Enon Baptist Church is one of the older churches in Louisiana. The following is taken from "History of Enon Church," and sent to the author in 1976 by Rev. Ross West, pastor:

"Enon church was organized December 31, 1838, under the leadership of Brothers Jesse Crawford and William Fortenberry. The following were the charter members: John Fisher, Jerry Magee, Charles Toney, Lewis Lee, Stacy Toney, Linea Magee, Cinthia Young, Martha Young and Elizabeth Young.

"The first church building was constructed of split logs with a puncheon floor. This rustic building was used for school purposes, too. . . .

"The second building was a framed weather-boarded house with no windows. It was unceiled, unlighted and resembled an old-fashioned barn. It was heated by an open fire from a huge fireplace. . . .

"During the hundred years (1838-1934) of our church's existence the following ministers have served as pastors: Rev. William Fortenberry, December 31, 1838; Rev. W. H. Varnado, November 15, 1845; Rev. Isaac Muse, December 11, 1847; Rev. Jesse Crawford, September 21, 1849; Rev. I. Pounds, April 8, 1855; Rev. Caivin Magee, May 2, 1856, Rev. I. Pounds, May 2, 1861; Rev. J. C. Seal, May 2, 1863; Rev. W. H. Adams, July 12, 1873; Rev. D. A. Booth, July 12, 1882; Rev. C. T. Corkern, June 25, 1887; Rev. E. F. Corkern, June 24, 1889; Rev. C. A. Voyles, July 1, 1913; Rev. W. T. Darling, January 10, 1915; Rev. L. G. Cleverdon, 1919; Rev. Horatio Mitchell, February 12, 1922; Rev. J. F. McLelland, July, 1934.

"An interesting event that happened during Brother (Joseph C.) Seals' ministry occurred during the Civil War. He and his daughter were on their way to fill his appointment at Enon. They were riding horseback when they met a division of the Union army. (These Union soldiers were bivouaced at old Canaan Baptist Church west of Franklinton, we are told - LSW) The soldiers took Brother Seals and the two horses, letting the daughter go free. Later he was released

near (where) Pearl River (now is), but no services were held at Enon that day.

"Prior to 1870 Enon was affiliated with the Hobolochitto Association, but withdrew to join the West Pearl River Association. . . ."

The Association of churches was showing considerable growth despite the economic, social and political oppression of "Reconstruction" which followed the "Civil War." There were 12 churches represented at the 1866 session reporting a total of 348 members. The twelve churches were Palestine, Union, Hancock County; Gainesville, Bethel, Salem, Zion Hill, Mount Olive, Elim, Union, Washington Parish; Bonner Creek, Enon and Pine Grove.

The following ministers are listed in the minutes of the association: W. H. Varnado, A. M. Slaydon, Reuben R. Breland, Thaddeus B. Mitchell, Roland E. Burks, E. W. Moore, J. C. Seal, W. H. Adams, J. C. Pounds and W. J. Fortenberry.

It was agreed upon at this meeting that the annual sessions of the body would be held alternately on the east and west side of Pearl River.

Printed before 1860
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STATISTICAL TABLE FOR 1860.

..STATISTICAL TABLE FOR 1860," (including tables for 1861 and 1862) of Minutes of Proceedings of Hobolochitto Baptist Association printed in 1862.

STATISTICAL TABLE.

CLERICI.

Palestine	T. B. Mitchell, H. Smith
Gainesville	A. M. Slattery, G. W. Tollemah
Poethel	H. Stude, J. C. Baughman
Salem	D. Grantham, W. Warden
Zion Hill	John Mitchell, F. T. Smith
Juniper Grove	J. Marvin, Allen Bunge
Utopia	W. H. Varnado, F. Jones
Elm	

TABLE FOR 1861.

1862

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Page 1 Minutes of Proceedings of 1862 annual session of
"HABOLA CHITTO BAPTIST ASSOCIATION." Minutes for years
1860, 1861 and 1862 included in first printing of Minutes in 1862.
No minutes printed before 1862.

MINUTES

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OF THE

HABOLA CHITTO

1862 Definite

BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,

1862

The Habola Chitto Baptist Association met this day in her sixth annual meeting with the church at Palestine.

A sermon introductory was preached by Bro. W. H. Varnado from John 10:16: "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd."

After an intermission the delegates from the churches assembled in the meeting-house and after singing a hymn, prayer was offered by the Moderator, and the Association was called to order by Bro. W. H. Varnado, the former Moderator.

Then called for and read letters from churches and enroled the names of the delegates. (See table.)

Preaching at the stand by Bro. T. B. Mitchell.

The Association then proceeded to elect officers for the ensuing year, Bro. T. Stockstill acting teller. Bro. W. H. Varnado was elected Moderator; A. M. Slaydon, Clerk, and Brother Freeman Jones, Treasurer.

Called for petitionary letters; none.

Ministers of the gospel of the same faith and order were invited to seats with us.

CALLED FOR CORRESPONDENCE,

Which, to our sorrow, failed from both the sister associations, to-wit: the Pearl River and Eastern Louisiana.

Agreed to continue correspondence as follows:

To the Pearl River Bro. Stockstill to write, and Bros. A. M. Slaydon and H. P. Pittman, messengers.

To the Eastern Louisiana Bro. W. H. Varnado to write, and Bros. T. B. Mitchell and F. Jones, messengers.

Bros. T. Stockstill, F. Jones and H. P. Pittman were appointed a committee to arrange preaching for the Sabbath, who reported Bro. A. M. Slaydon to preach first, and Brother W. H. Varnado to close the services of the meeting.

Agreed to hold our next meeting with the Union Church, Hancock county, Miss., to commence on Saturday before the fourth Sunday in October, 1863.



Elder Andrew M. Slaydon (1826-1898), For many years clerk and later moderator of the Hobolochitto Baptist Association. He was the first minister of the gospel ordained in the Hancock-Pearl River County area.

CHAPTER VIII

THE HOBOLOCHITTO REACHES WEST - 1867-1871

With four churches in Washington Parish, Louisiana, now cooperating, the Hobolochitto was reaching to the west. The 11th annual sussion was held with Pine Grove Church in Yamacraw community in Hancock County, Mississippi, October 1867. Eld. E. W. Moore brought the opening message to a waiting congregation anxious to hear the Word of God preached in its purity and power, as these old fathers of the faith could preach it. His text was I. Cor. 3:11.

The election of officers continued Varnado, Simmons and Adams as moderator, clerk and treasurer respectively.

“Rules of Faith and Gospel Order” were found in the minutes of 1866. They were almost identical with those found in the minutes of the old Pearl River Association to the north. This probably reflected the influence of the churches of the Pearl River Association which was organized some 22 years before the Hobolochitto, but ceased to exist a few years later. A few of the churches had represented with messengers to the Pearl River, and some had workd with the East Louisiana Association prior to coming into the fellowship of the Hobolochitto.

LOUISIANA'S FIRST CHURCH WITH HOBOLOCHITTO

This session, like so many others, was destined to be an historic occasion. The old Half Moon Bluff Baptist Church on Bogue Chitto River in Washington Parish, Louisiana's first and oldest Baptist church, was received into the body on petitionary letter. This historic old church was constituted October 12, 1812. Some historians contend the old church may have been established as early as 1811.

“Abstract History of the Mississippi Baptist Association, 1806 to 1906,” in its account of the 12th annual session of the Mississippi Baptist Association convened October 17, 1812, with Zion Hill Church, Amite County, says: “Half-Moon Bluff church on Bogue Chitto river in Louisiana, was received into the Mississippi Association. Messengers were Joseph Lewis and Joseph Erwin. A recent brochure on the history of the church says that Joseph Lewis, a charter member of the church, might have been the first pastor. Nathan Morris,” it continues, “was pastor of the church from 1813 to 1822.

A note on the history of the Hobolochitto Association found in “Complete History of Mississippi Baptists,” says: “Half-Moon Bluff entered the Mississippi Association in 1811. Went into organization of Pearl River Association in 1820. Helped constitute the Bogue Chitto in 1870 (This was after working some three or four years with the

Hobolochitto); went into Magee's Creek Association in 1880. The church had 38 members in 1880 - only 43 in 1890."

This would indicate the church, like all the old churches in those days, had suffered some traumatic experiences during war and the subsequent "Reconstruction" period. The minutes of the Hobolochitto Association of 1874 reveals that the church changed her name (after relocating) from Half-Moon Bluff to Hay's Creek. It seems conclusively enough that Half-Moon Bluff, now Hay's Creek, is the first and oldest Baptist church in the State of Louisiana.

Calvary Baptist Church, Bayou Chicot, near Opelousas, organized November 13, 1812, was the second church established in Louisiana. Mount Nebo, constituted January 31, 1813, in Tangipahoa Parish, was the third. Peniel church, Washington Parish, organized in 1813, was believed to have been the fourth church. Others followed.

The following excerpts from a recent history brochure of Hay's Creek Baptist Church will be interesting: "Hay's Creek Baptist Church could possibly be the oldest church in the State of Louisiana. . . Historians hold to the reliable and acceptable testimony of parents and grandparents that Hay's Creek Southern Baptist Church is a direct continuation to the first Baptist Church in the State of Louisiana, the Half-Moon Bluff Church which was organized October 12, 1812. It is this view which is predominate among present members of Hay's Creek Southern Baptist Church."

Let us note here that Half-Moon Bluff (Hay's Creek) was not a "Southern" Baptist Church during her early history. The Southern Baptist Convention was not organized until 1845. It was not active in this area until near the turn of the century. The churches were mostly known as "Lankmark" or "Regular" Baptist.

Glen Lee Greene, in his book, "House Upon A Rock," about Southern Baptist in Louisiana, says that "in 1811, a Bogue Chitto Baptist group asked for fraternal assistance in organization of a church in what is now Washington Parish, in Louisiana. The Baptist Association of Mississippi chose David Cooper and Thomas Mercer to help in the organization of this church. It is the long standing tradition that it was organized on October 12, 1812.

"A few days later it was affiliated with the Mississippi Association. This church adopted the name Half-Moon Bluff Baptist Church. . .

"Half-Moon Bluff Baptist Church did not owe its existence to missionary efforts on the part of any other church or association; it had already been gathered when the Association heard about it. In effect then, the church existed before the formal ceremonies of the constitution gave it status.

"Left to its own resources, the members of Half-Moon Bluff soon erected a house of worship. It has been described as being a rustic

log structure of modest proportions and starkly simple in its appointments. It was typical of the first meeting house on the frontier, with a dirt floor, a mud chimney, and puncheon benches. This building was used by the community as a school house and after its extinction (or probably its re-location), it survived for a time as a saddlery. . . ."

Some of the former pastors of the church include Thomas Corkern, E. H. Garner, W. F. Magehee, W. A. Murry, J. R. Burch, J. J. Linton, T. V. Fortenberry, J. E. Bilbo, E. C. Lea, T. H. Bankston, W. J. Fortenberry, J. C. Smith, Wade Smith, A Rev. Daton, C. C. Cantrell, Bill Minden, Hartman Sullivan, Royce Dowdy. Aubrey Veuleman, Paul Aultman, Louis Sewell, Richard Brackin, Robert Powell, D. P. Worsham, Travis Cowart and Norman C. Simmons.

The minutes of the Association for 1867 listed post office addresses of church clerks as follows: Palestine, Gainesville; Union, Gainesville; Bethel, Riceville; Gainesville, Gainesville; Salem, Gainesville; Zion Hill, Pinetucky; Union, Sun, La.; Mount Olive, Shady Grove, La.; Bonner Creek, Franklinton, La.; Elim, Shieldsboro; Enon, Franklinton, La.; Pine Grove, Gainesville; Half-Moon Bluff, Franklinton, La.

Historic Half-Moon Bluff Church on Bogue Chitto, Louisiana's first and oldest, had been chosen to host the 12th annual session of the Association which met with them October 3-5, 1868. The seventeen churches - ten in Mississippi and seven in Louisiana - represented a continued growth and development of the Lord's work east and west of Pearl River. The minutes listed new churches received as Pearlington in Hancock County, Mississippi; and Bethany, Pisgah and Hebron in Louisiana.

W. H. Varnado was again chosen moderator; T. J. Simmons, clerk; and W. H. Adams, treasurer. Eld. W. H. "Bill" Adams brought a stirring message from II Tim. 2:19 to open the meeting.

Eld. B. L. Lea was the only new pastor listed in the minutes. Correspondence was received from East Louisiana and Pearl River Associations.

FIRST ASSOCIATIONAL MISSIONARY CHOSEN

The 1868 session was also the occasion of sending out the first messenger-elected associational missionary. The territory embraced by the Association was yet very much a mission field. All the pastors were in fact missionaries themselves. It was all mission work. But the zeal of the messengers found them disposed to send Eld. William G. Stovall, for a time editor of the newspaper, the Gainesville Star, to work in "the destitute places within the bounds of the association, including Logtown, Pearlington, and around the Gulf Coast at Shieldsboro, Pass Christian, and west of Pearl River."

Like Eld. Reuben R. Breland, Stovall was a converted Methodist. Historians have noted Bro. Stovall as being the first missionary supported by the churches of the Hobolochitto Baptist Association. The churches were, however, cooperating some with the missions work of the General Association of Baptist Churches of Mississippi. The minutes showed the Association had \$92.67 on hand. It was voted to give all surplus money on hand to the associational mission fund. Mission fires were being kindled among the churches and preachers of the Hobolochitto.

Most Baptist Associations have always taken great pride in printing the minutes of the proceedings each year. These records have proven to be our most authentic and reliable source of history through the years. Prior to 1868 the minutes were printed at Amite, Louisiana. After that, for some time, the association clerk had to get the minutes printed in Memphis, Tennessee, by Southwestern Publishing Co.

“CIRCULAR LETTERS”

The Hobolochitto Association had been signally blessed with great preachers in those pioneer years. They were men of strength, character and dedication. They were good leaders who held the complete confidence of the people. The ministerial personnel of the Association was firmly united in love in quest of souls and the best interest of the churches. As was the custom in those days in all associations, Eld. J. C. Seal wrote a “circular letter” on unity, and there seemed to be great unity of the faith and practice. The following was found in the minutes of 1868:

Circular Letter

“The harmony and peace which has been so predominant a characteristic of your body since it had an existence, may, in some intolerable degree account for its distinguished success and spiritual prosperity. Indeed, such has been the proverbial unanimity of sentiment, unanimity of feeling and brotherly love pervading this Association, that the world, even, may have been constrained to observe: ‘Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.’ Brethren, what stronger evidence could we have of the favor and blessing of our divine Master? What a convincing proof of the power and reality of the religion of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Fifteen years ago our country was overrun with wickedness and vice; the sound of the Gospel was seldom heard in our midst; ridicule, scorn, mockery, and a general religious insensibility marked the face of our land; but, thanks be to God, the scene is now somewhat changed, churches have sprung up in our midst, a high standard of morals has been erected, around which many of the unconverted are even now rallying. The influential prominent leading characters of our coun-

try, formerly employed in the service of Satan, and throwing the weight of their influence into the scale against the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, are now standing members of the church of Christ, bright and shining ornaments of society. This, brethren is calculated to inspire our hearts with gratitude and fill our souls with love to God."

"During the period of your existence many political changes have occurred and the soil of our unhappy country has been drenched with the blood of our sons, and awful results of a want of unity and concord in our national council - the sure consequences of unharmonious and distracting elements in any organized body - but these revolutions and changes have not changed the progress of religion, no, the advancement of our Redeemer's kingdom; but, on the contrary, by endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace, the gospel of Christ has been manifested to be the power of God unto salvation; religious knowledge is increasing, the Association growing, and our social relations improving. These are good results, the fruits of peace, harmony and unity, may we not say the reward of your fidelity and brotherly love?

"By consulting the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of St. John, it will be seen that our Savior left us an invaluable legacy in that last and most sublime prayer which he offered in behalf of the church with the apostles.

"The chief interest of the church which that prayer embraced was the unity of his people, 'that they may all be one in us' - John XVII:21. The latter clause of this verse may be regarded as a powerful incentive to faith.

"A consumation thus devotedly prayed for by the Son of God must be of incalculable importance to every believer in his name. It is, therefore, believed that by the united effort of this Association in preserving peace, harmony, and brotherly love, an influence is exercised on the mind of the world which enables us to hope for a continuation of the blessings of God in the conversion of souls and the general promotion of his cause in our midst. Brethren, let our prayers ascend to his throne for a continuance of this harmony. Let us watch that no discordant element creep into our Association to confuse our minds. Let us ever rely upon that arm which is able to support us, and our souls shall be made more happy.

"Again, the good feeling among us has attracted the attention of churches, and consequently a general union of sentiment is distinctly observable in all our operations and the prosperity of the cause greatly promoted among them, this is as it shoud be.

"The general manifestation of the spirit of God, throughout the entire bounds of the Association, is a pledge of the faithfulness of our

ministers. It is, however, to be regretted that a large portion of territory embraced within its bounds is in a destitute condition, and a want of ministers is there most seriously felt: 'The harvest, indeed, is truly great, but the laborers are few.' This Association, it is hoped, is awake to a sense of her duty in trying to supply this destitution according to her ability. Already much good has been done under her auspices, in this way, as is indicated by the Missionary Report."

—Joseph Colson Seal

No institution can rise above its leadership. The Hobolochitto Association had been viable, vigorous and victorious because of the indomitable character and caliber of its leaders. Unfortunately, this was not always to be the case in the years ahead.

A closing statement found in Leavell's and Bailey's A Complete History of Mississippi Baptists of the kind of leadership the old Association was blessed to have in those early days:

"The Hobolochitto was composed of strong, sensible men, men who strove for the greatest good and for the greatest number. Their movement forward was not feverish, at any time, but slow, steady, sure. The body has had a great mission to fill, and has proved worthy of their sacred commission."

The 13th annual session was convened October 2-4, 1869, with Union Church in Hancock County. Union was by this time, probably the strongest church in the association. It was emerging as a leader among the churches in the work. Officers chosen as in the previous year. Eld. W. H. Varnado brought the opening message from John 14:27 to get the meeting off to a thrilling start. There were 18 churches represented including Juniper Grove which had returned to the Association after working with the Pearl River since 1862.

The church messengers made it clear at this meeting that they would not fellowship false doctrines nor immoral conduct. For some un-explained reason, the Hobolochitto dropped further correspondence with the East Louisiana Association.

The saints were gathered with Enon Church in Washington Parish for the 14th annual session on Saturday before the 1st Sunday in October, 1870. It is not clear who preached, but there were always from five to seven or eight messages during these meetings. Eld. W. H. Varnado was elected moderator. It was to be the last time the venerable father and esteemed leader of the Association would preside over the body after being so honored some thirteen or fourteen times. T. J. Simmons was re-elected clerk.

Others who served as pastor at Enon in addition to those listed (since 1934) include: R. F. Dykes, H. A. Sylvest, S. G. Pope, Joe Clapp, R. E. Glaze, Jr., Ray Wallace, M. E. Flowers, Jr., C. W. Averett, James W. Street, W. Swartz, Joe Blair, Harry McIntyre and

Ross West.

According to "History of Enon Church" sent to the author in 1976, Enon left the regular (association) Baptist work in 1901 to affiliate with another work which identified them with the Southern Baptist Convention which was relatively new at that time in southeast Louisiana and south Mississippi.

A closing note stated: "It is humanly impossible to mention by name all who have contributed to the Lord's work at Enon, for there have been many. Today, looking to the Lord for leadership and depending on him for strength, Enon Baptist Church looks forward to a continuing fruitful ministry to the glory of God."

The next annual session was convened September 30, 1871, at Juniper Grove. This is believed to have been the first meeting held with Juhiper Grove. Eld. William G. Stovall was elected moderator. T. J. Simmons was chosen clerk for his sixth and last time. It has been said that T. J. Simmons was One of the most dedicated men known among the churches throughout southeast Louisiana and south Mississippi. It is highly probable, according to some sources, that Canaan Baptist Church west of Franklinton, Louisiana, was organized in the home of T. J. Simon's parents about 1839.

The beloved Eld. Joseph C. Seal, in his own inimitable way, brought a heart-warming introductory message from Luke 22:29.

WEST PEARL RIVER ASSOCIATION ORGANIZED

The Hobolochitto had extended her hand to aid and nurture the work west of Pearl River since 1864 when the first church west of the river petitioned for fellowship. The Hobolochitto preachers had assisted with the work in that area in every possible way they could since the mid 1850's. At the 1870 annual session seven churches west of the river expressed a desire to withdraw for the purpose of forming their own association. They were commended and bidden God-speed in their efforts. Thus in 1871, seven churches west of Pearl River sent their messengers to meet with, it is believed by some historians, the old Canaan Baptist Church west of Franklinton and organized the West Pearl River Baptist Association. It is wonderful to know that the West Pearl River Association of churches continues as an associational working body to this day. Their hearts have been discouraged many times along the way; beset with fiery trials, but after a time of patience, crowned with triumph to inspire and encourage their hearts again.

Through the blessings of good fellowship and the strength of good leadership, the West Pearl enjoyed many years of constant growth and fruitful soul-winning. There were times when the number of churches cooperating in the body increased to twenty or more. Because

of self-designing men, with more zeal than love for souls, there came a period of struggle which reduced the number of churches and stymied its progress.

The wrongs and offenses of others can cause useful men to turn inward instead of outward. When men permit such to happen, they defeat themselves. But by the marvelous grace and providence of God, the old West Pearl River Association has weathered the storm. Her number reduced to five or six churches in recent years, there is evidence of a renewed zeal, courage and determination to accomplish great things for God.

Despite these trying and tragic experiences the body has successfully rebuffed the subtle incursions of "conventionism" and all other "isms" with ambitions and designs to control the work; maintaining her historic position as regular Baptists, be they called Missionary, Landmark, or Association Baptists. It is clearly evident that the highwater mark of progress they once enjoyed is measurably lowered. But it must also be acknowledged that in their meetings of more recent years they enjoy a warm and rich fellowship among their people and their pastors. This, we believe, is the harbinger of rekindled zeal aimed toward progress and prosperity. We must believe our brethren and sisters in the churches of the old West Pearl possess a genuine desire to achieve real and meaningful things for our Lord again.

CHAPTER IX

THE HOBOLOCHITTO TURNS TO THE EAST

With the West Pearl River Association established and demonstrating a readiness to evangelize all that vast area of southeast Louisiana, the churches of the Hobolochitto, feeling a certain sense of satisfaction and triumph, as the channel through which God had supplied strength to those churches, they now turn to the east. The old Leaf River Association to the northeast had long been divided and its usefulness eroding. It seemed providential that the Hobolochitto, as a missionary influence moving from an unexpected direction, to gather strength, and move with dispatch toward the east, where souls awaited the gospel message and churches needed to be established.

The minutes show that the 1872 meeting was with Bonner Creek Baptist Church in Washington Parish. Eld. Andrew M. Slaydon who had served as clerk of the association since its organization in 1856, was elected moderator. A note found in the minutes by the clerk of the association said of Brother Slaydon: "He was a wise man, and one in whom all had the utmost confidence." Brother Hardy M. Smith was elected clerk, and G. W. Holleman, treasurer. Eld. W. H. "Bill" Adams

delivered the opening sermon from I Peter 2:6. Nineteen churches represented including four new churches received on petitionary letters. These were Jerusalem, Covington County; Red Creek, Harrison County; Bethlehem, Marion County; and Boguefalia near Covington, Louisiana.

A missionary committee of ten was elected by the Association. This move reflects the Association's continued interest in mission work in general.

The next annual session convened with Red Creek Baptist Church in Harrison County, October 4-6, 1873. Eld. W. H. Varnado brought a stirring introductory message, using I Cor. 3:11, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," as a text. When William H. Varnado stood up to preach, people expected to hear something worth listening to. They were never disappointed!

Eld. A. M. Slaydon was chosen moderator; Eld. T. D. Bush, clerk; and G. W. Holleman, treasurer. Fourteen churches were represented. New churches were Ten Mile, Sunny Hill and Sand Hill. The Ten Mile Church in Stone County had been organized in 1870. We are not sure of the exact dates when Sunny Hill and Sand Hill churches were organized. Corresponding messengers were received from the West Pearl River Association.

In 1874 the messengers of the churches held their meeting with Gainesville Baptist Chruch in old Gainesville. Attending the annual sessions of the Association in those days, sharing the fellowship, hearing the powerful preaching of the pastors and missionaries, along with the challenging and encouraging reports from the churches and mission station, was a rich experience within itself.

In his notes on the Hobolochitto Association, Eld. Hardy Smith said: "The spirit of unity was prevalent in the Hobolochitto Association and her growth had been great; her territory had been enlarged; great peace and love characterized her assemblies. We were friendly and had correspondence with neighboring assiciations, they reciprocating the same with gladness."

A. M. Slaydon, T. D. Bush and G. W. Holleman were re-elected to fill their respective offices as in the previous year. Eld. Thomas Price preached a great sermon from Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." These introductory messages, as they were traditionally called, were a kind of keynote address from the Word of God intended to set the tenor and objectives of the meeting. They usually did just that. These backwoods, homespun pioneer preachers came down hard on sin; they stood for the truth in love; and shaped the destiny of a country which was once the envy of the nations.

Eighteen churches represented at the 1874 meeting. A petition of request to the body for missionary assistance reveals that an effort was being made to re-establish the old Elim Church near Bay St. Louis. What success they had, if any, was never clear.

New churches coming now from the north and east to join the warm fellowship and progress enjoyed by the churches of the Hobolochitto. These included Black Creek, near Augusta; Cancelling Hill, Stonewall; Little Black Creek, Marion County; and County Line, Augusta. The churches reported 158 baptisms; 30 excluded from membership; and a total of 672 members - blacks and whites were listed separately as had been the custom of the churches since their beginning.

As some measure of recovery from the ashes and inhuman conditions of post war reconstruction allowed, the churches were encouraging and assisting the Negroes in establishing their own churches. The old Mississippi Baptist Association had taken the initiative in suggesting such. The following is noted in the minutes of 1865: "The Association advised the churches to organize their colored members into separate bodies at as early a day as might be practical. They were no longer slaves."

Before, during, and for sometime after the Civil War, it was the Baptists, more than anyone else who evangelized the negro people in America; and gave them a helping hand in building their own churches. The following excerpt from an editorial by this writer in the May 1, 1968, issue of the Mississippi Baptist, will attest to this obvious fact:

"A recent national network news report informed us that there are more than 20 million negroes in the United States. Some 12 million of these are church members of some denomination. The report pointed out that negroes in the Unite States have traditionally been Baptists. At the present time, the report stated, more than sixty percent of Negro church membership in the United States is Baptist.

"This clearly indicates a number of things which, I believe, should claim our attention: First, that it must have been the Baptists in the early history of our nation who did the mission work to evangelize the American Negro during and after slavery times; secondly, it must have been the Baptists who helped them establish and build their own churches. This writer can well remember the time in south Mississippi, where he was born and reared, that one seldom heard of any kind of churches among the negroes but Baptists and a few Methodists. . . ."

The minutes show that Elder J. B. Hamberlin was received at the 1874 session as a representative of the State Baptist Convention. This was believed to be the first attempt of the State Convention to gain favor and solicit support from the churches of the Hobolochitto Association. Both the General Association of Baptist Churches in

Mississippi and the State Convention were represented at the meeting. The State Convention had been organized back in 1836, after a failure several years before. The Southern Baptist Convention was legally chartered as a corporation under the laws of the State of Georgia in 1845. The sympathies of the Hobolochitto had clearly been with the General Association to this time. Bro. Hamberlin preached at the church on Sunday and a mission offering of \$52.20 was received.

Elder A. M. "Andy" Slaydon and John Williams were now serving as associational missionaries for the churches and within the bounds of the Hobolochitto Association. Their combined reports showed 72 baptized, one church organized, and \$148.00 collected "on the field."

The territory of the Association at this time embraced Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Perry, and a part of Marion Counties. These counties at the time included all the coastal south Mississippi area.

HARDY SMITH . . . PRINCE OF PREACHERS

Hardy M. Smith, a zealous and dedicated layman in his church and in the Association; clerk of Palestine church prior to 1871, and clerk of the Hobolochitto Association in 1872, had made known his calling to preach the gospel. This came as no surprise to those who knew Hardy Smith best. His contemporaries all recognized him as a Godly man with tremendous spiritual qualities. His life was a great asset to the work of the Lord in this area. A collection of notes about his life and ministry found among his descendants reveal that Hardy M. Smith was born in Bladon Conty, North Carolina, November 23, 1838. With his parents he moved to Hancock County, Mississippi, in 1850, at the age of 12 years. He made a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ at Palestine Church September 24, 1855. He was baptized into the fellowship of Palestine Baptist Church by W. H. Varnado in Pearl River September 30, 1855. As a volunteer, he joined the Army of the Confederacy in defense of the South in the War between the States, or "Civil War" as some had chosen to call it. In 1863 he married Sarah Jane Stanford, daughter of Mr. And Mrs. Noah Stanford, charter members of Union Baptist Church at Caesar. He was licensed to preach, and on September 13, 1874, ordained to the full work of the ministry. After a fruitful preaching and pastoral ministry of some forty-five years, the Worshipful Grandmaster of the Universe called him from "labor to refreshments." He died May 26, 1919. Memorial services were conducted at Union Baptist Church with Eld. W. I. Williams in charge. The "old soldier of the cross" was laid to rest in Caesar Cemetery with masonic rites.

Hardy Smith, "Prince of Preachers," was loved and esteemed by

all who knew him. What he lacked in physical stature was more than compensated for in moral and spiritual stature. He was known by his contemporaries as an exceedingly kind and gentle soul with a profound love for all, especially for those who were without Christ as their Saviour. His daughter, Mrs. Louisa Magehee, wrote about her father, and his mild and gracious personality, stating that he was often affectionately referred to by his close friends as Brother "Easy" Smith.

Juniper Grove was host to the 1875 session of the Association October 9-11. Eighteen churches represented including three new churches Elim, Biloxi Creek and Bethel. The Bethel church had been organized only a few months earlier in the Buck Branch community where it has continued through the years as one of the great churches of this area. There was a church by the same name organized near or just to the north of where the present church stands, in 1846, which had been dissolved about 1866. Elim was the second church by that name organized in the vicinity of Bay St. Louis. The earlier one, like Bethel, had been dissolved. Biloxi Creek Church was in Harrison County.

Eld. Andrew M. Slaydon was chosen again as moderator, and Eld. T. D. Bush, clerk. Brother Slaydon brought the opening message from John 10:30. Andy Slaydon was known as a powerful preacher, uncompromising of his convictions, and very courageous in his labors for the Lord. It was often said that his messages seemed fresh from heaven, filled with scripture, and gun-barrel straight. A free-will offering was received during the meeting for the missions work of the General Association of Baptist Churches of Mississippi.

BETHEL OBSERVES CENTENNIAL

Bethel Baptist Church in the Buck Branch community on the old Columbia-to-Gainesville river road observed its One Hundredth Anniversary with special Homecoming Day services in 1975 according to a brochure on the history of the church published for the historic occasion. The brochure lists the names of charter members as follows: William G. Wheat, who was also the first deacon of the church; Jim Stuart, Eli Pigott, Miss Laurel Stuart, Miss Emily Wheat and Mr. And Mrs. John Kennedy.

The centennial brochure notes that the church now cooperates in the work of the Pearl River Baptist Association, the Mississippi Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention.

The centennial brochure relates a bit of humor about the church's beginning. "One of the men present for the business of organizing the church pledged one dollar a year to defray expenses of the traveling preacher. A short while later this generous gentleman moved away and soon found himself in the business of organizing another church.

Feeling that his first duty was to his new church, he promptly asked for his letter and also his dollar." Could it possibly be that to future generations of Baptists this gentleman was known as "Brother Generosity?"

Old Bethel Church has been blessed through the past one hundred years under the pastoral leadership of humble and able men. The church has consequently made a tremendous contribution toward the spiritual, moral and cultural welfare of this section of our country. Pastors listed are: J. W. Tolar, Benton Fortenberry, Frank Fortenberry, J. B. Flannigan, T. J. Simmons, Newton Breland, W. I. Williams, J. G. Sibley, W. L. Holcomb, Willie Magehee, N. F. Clark, John P. Culpepper, Lamar Holcomb, Eli Callahan, A. O. Ashworth, Phil J. Walker, Tom L. Pfeifer, A Bro. Cruise, S. J. Rhodes, Upton Reynolds, Dewitt T. Evans, James B. Carpenter, Roy Humphrey, R. K. Chadbourne, Miner R. Dixon, A. R. Vaughn, Filer J. Seal, Mel Mason and Joseph L. Small.

The 20th annual session of the Association was held with Black Creek Baptist Church in Perry County, October 7-9, 1876. After the election of officers, petitionary letters were called for, and the following churches were received: Oak Grove Church in the Silver Run community on Wolf River; Morris Hill in the Appleton community; and Oak Hill on Flint Creek. Oak Grove Church had been constituted sometime in 1871. The exact dates the other two were established is not certain.

Palestine, the old "mother church," on the Columbia-to-Gainesville Road near Pearl River, was host to the 21st annual session October 13-15, 1877. The body was formally organized for business by electing Eld. Thomas Price as moderator; T. D. Bush, clerk; and J. O. Bilbo, treasurer. Eld. John Williams brought the opening message after reading II Tim. 4:16.

The 22nd annual session was with Ten Mile Church in Harrison (now Stone) County, October 9-11, 1878. The venerable Eld. Hardy Smith warmed the hearts of the saints with a moving introductory message. Mt. Zion was the lone new church received into the working fellowship of the body. The Association voted to employ Eld. T. D. Bush as local missionary to work north of Columbia. He was to be paid a salary of \$1.50 per day.

Bethel Church, Marion (now Pearl River) County, hosted the 23rd annual session October 11-13, 1879.

Singing has always shared a prominent roll in the worship and praise services of the churches. Many of the churches in those days had no musical instruments. The old tuning fork was used on some occasions. Someone gave the "pitch" and the saints lifted their voices in joyful praise to God. A few churches could afford the old-fashioned bellows organ with foot pedals. People would often stand around the

organ and sing. The old Sacred Harp hymnbooks were popular then. In these ways the praise services were conducted in the churches and at the associational meetings. Eld. A. M. Slaydon, following the praise service to get the associational meeting under way, preached from John 14:16.

The number of churches throughout south Mississippi and southeast Louisiana had greatly increased since Palestine was established in 1842, and the Association was formed in 1856. Three new churches were received into the fellowship of the Association at the 1879 session. These were Henleyfield, Spring Hill and Red Creek Union.

Red Creek Union was constituted sometime before 1879. It is believed that Spring Hill was organized early in the year of 1879 also. The following is noted from the "History of Henleyfield Baptist Church" compiled for the 102nd Anniversary in 1976:

"Henleyfield Baptist Church, now known as First Baptist Church of Henleyfield, was organized in 1874 with eight charter members - George Mitchell and wife; Joe Burks and wife; Harvey Stuart and wife; and Hezekiah Wheat and wife. Older members who were living thirty or forty years ago stated that Elders W. H. Varnado and A. M. Slaydon led in establishing the church, assisted, it was believed, by Elders T. D. Bush and Thomas Price. The old Zion Hill Baptist Church now located east of McNeill, was originally located near where Henleyfield Church now stands. The first rustic rough-lumber meeting house of the Henleyfield Church stood at the same location, maybe a few feet to the south, of the present house of worship. That first structure also housed the first Henleyfield school. The church as well as the school named Henleyfield due to the building being erected on the old field of Jermy Henley, the first permanent settler of the community. The second building was a two-story structure erected about 1911. This building was shared by the Henley Field Masonic Lodge — 534, Chinquapin, Mississippi. The Henley Field Lodge was chartered under dispensation of the Grand Lodge in 1911. It lost its charter May 15, 1938. It was a common thing in those days for churches and masonic lodges to share buildings in the community. The Henleyfield church held their worship services down stairs, and the lodge met upstairs.

The present graceful brick edifice is the third house of worship erected about 1959. The church has since acquired additional land, built a new pastorum, and a new additional educational annex.

Over the one hundred and five years - 1874 to 1979 - since the formal organization of the old church, pastors have included: A. M. Slaydon, T. D. Bush, W. H. "Uncle Billy" Varnado, W. W. "Bill" Mitchell, J. P. Johnson, J. B. Flanigan, J. E. Bilbo, N. F. Clark, G. W. Holcomb, W. Mageehee, W. I. Williams, Alvin C. King, J. M. "Jim"

Stuart, S. C. Hammock, L. S. Walker, J. W. Pope, George C. Stockstill, J. B. Stonecypher, Z. T. Rankin, R. E. Sullivan, Kenneth W. Flynt, Robert Bullock, Levi Reynolds, Melburn Cockrell, Glennis Bell, Thomas Welborn, Jr., Ocie Crowe, Arthur Shaw, and B. A. Nolan. N. F. Clark served twice. J. W. Pope was the first full-time pastor. The church's letter to the association listed the "pastor's salary" of J. E. Bilbo as \$25.00 for the year 1890.

First Baptist Church of Henleyfield stands today, after many traumatic experiences, as one of the many fine churches in Pearl River County and the vast area embraced within the reach and influence of the Hobolochitto Association. The old church, her human faults and failures notwithstanding, has been instrumental in producing her share of responsible and productive citizens. As "Uncle Henry" Burks was so often heard to say: "Henleyfield is the garden spot of Pearl River County." Perhaps the same could be said of many communities across this great land which have been built around such churches. No community is ever better than its churches and other Christian institutions. God has smiled upon us all! We have been signally blessed. These old churches, being composed of human beings, are not perfect, no one has claimed such for them; but they have definitely been instruments for great and lasting good. Only eternity will reveal the full measure of their achievements. We can afford to do no less than be eternally grateful for everyone of them.

At this session (1879) of the Association the messengers voted to continue support for Eld. T. D. Bush as associational missionary in the area north of Columbia. His salary was raised from \$1.50 per day to \$2.00 per day.

Cancelling Hill in Harrison County was host to the 24th annual session October 9-11, 1880. Eld. Thomas Price elected moderator; T. J. Mitchell, clerk; and Wiggins Hatten, treasurer. Eld. T. D. Bush delivered a very thought-provoking message from Daniel 2:44: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever."

Since the West Pearl River Association had been organized west of Pearl River, and the Hobolochitto had turned her attention eastward, the number of churches had once again swollen to twenty-two. These were Morris Hill, Zion Hill, Union, Ten Mile, Spring Hill, Sand Hill, Red Creek Union, Pine Grove, Palestine, Bethel, Red Creek, Oak Grove, Mt. Zion, Little Black Creek, Juniper Grove, County Line, Henleyfield, Gainesville, Cancelling Hill, Black Creek, Oak Hill and Biloxi Creek.

J. P. JOHNSTON, GENERAL ASSOCIATION MISSIONARY

Elder James Patten Johnston, venerable missionary for the State General Association, had, for a number of years, been working in east and south Mississippi. As has been pointed out before, very little was known about the work of the State Baptist Convention nor the Southern Baptist Convention in south Mississippi until near the turn of the century. However, at this session of the association, the interest of the State Convention as well as the General Association was presented in a brotherly and impartial way by missionaries T. D. Bush and J. P. Johnston. There were differing opinions about the "convention work," but it was not at this time the burning controversial issue was later to become.

The local churches had complete confidence in J. P. Johnston, an humble and able man, knowledgeable in the scriptures. He considered the State Convention, like the parent body, the Southern Baptist Convention, as being a staging area for "liberals" among Baptists. Because of his influence, and that of other pastors in the Hobolochitto, the State Convention made very little progress in this section of the state for some time. J. P. Johnston was strongly opposed to "the principles of conventionism." He, like others, considered it a departure from the historic principles and practices of Baptists.

RED CREEK ASSOCIATION ORGANIZED

Twelve churches mostly to the east expressed a desire to form an association for their own area. The committee on petitions and request recommended that "letters of dismission" be granted the following churches for the purpose of organizing a local association east of the Hobolochitto territory: Black Creek, Cancelling Hill, Juniper Grove, Little Black Creek, Mt. Zion, Oak Hill, Oak Grove, Red Creek Union, Sand Hill, Spring Hill, Ten Mile and Morris Hill. Juniper Grove, with 120 members, was the largest of these churches. Eld. James P. Johnston was a leader in organizing the Red Creek Baptist Association the following year 1880. Thus, the Hobolochitto Association, in only 24 years since its own constitution, has reached, first to the west, and then to the east, to establish and nurture two thriving associations. This development reduced the number of churches of the Hobolochitto again to only ten.

History must record that Eld. James Patten Johnston was a moving force and influence in the organization and development of many churches within the working bounds of the Hobolochitto Association and other parts of south Mississippi. He was definitely the most prominent leader in the organization of the old Red Creek Baptist

Association.

Eld. J. P. Johnston, a legend in his own right, was born April 4, 1817. His parents were of staunch Baptist stock from South Carolina. He was converted and baptized at Clear Creek Baptist Church in Smith County, Mississippi, by Eld. J. P. Martin in 1845. He was licensed to preach in 1850, and ordained in 1853 by the First Baptist Church (then called Mt. Nebo) of Bay Springs. His first pastorate was his home church for 25 years. He served as missionary for the churches of the old General Association of Mississippi for a long number of years.

E. B. Cox wrote a book on the Life and Work of Eld. James P. Johnston which the author has at hand. The biography relates to his place of leadership among Mississippi Baptist during his life. He was moderator of the Ebenezer Association. In the years to follow he was instrumental in establishing or strengthening churches in the villages of Picayune, Poplarville, Lumberton, Hattiesburg, Purvis and other villages and communities.

It was through the untiring efforts of J. P. Johnston that the gospel was first preached to the Choctaws in Mississippi.

"Brother Johnston and Brother U. L. Clark were the first to take into notice the Choctaw Indians, now living in Newton, Neshoba and Jasper Counties, and many others who were scattered over the southern counties. These Indians had never been taken into consideration by the State Convention or any other religious body, and of course were the same as any other tribe of heathen people until the General Association took notice of them. . . .

"Brother Johnston took Elder Jack (a Choctaw preacher) to the mouth of Pearl River, Hancock County, near Devil Swamp to preach to the Indians there, . . . He seemed to possess great power as a preacher among his people, for he met with great success and was the means of bringing many to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. He had not been at Devil Swamp long when he had baptized eleven, among them the chief of the tribe. "--Life and Work of Eld. James P. Johnston by E. B. Cox.

As long as responsible history of Mississippi is written the name of James P. Johnston will be noted with excitement and prominence. Like a Mississippi long-leaved pine, he stood straight and tall for the verbal inspiration of the holy scriptures, and the time-honored Biblical principles of the historic Baptists. Humble, dedicated and forthright, he was a recognized and respected leader of God's people in south Mississippi. Like William Henry Varnado, Andrew M. Slaydon and Thaddeus B. Mitchell, early church leaders in the Hobolochitto Association; and Zachariah Reeves, J. R. Graves, Nathan L. Clark and other scholarly preachers, teachers and leaders of that era in Mississippi, J. P. Johnston, without reservation, espoused the

cooperative work and principles of the regular missionary or association Baptists, or, as some prefered to call them, "Landmark Baptists."

The decade ending with 1880 witnessed a continued interest in missions in the Association. In addition to the missions activity within the bounds of the Hobolochitto, and in other areas of Mississippi, the churches were giving some financial support to missions in China, Africa, Italy and Brazil.

The annual session of the Hobolochitto convened with Union church in Hancock County October 8-10, 1881, with A. M. Slaydon, moderator; T. J. Mitchell, clerk; and Hardy Smith, treasurer. Eld. Thomas Price, considered "a man with a great gift for preaching," brought the introductory message from Psalms 107:20, "He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from destruction." This was the first meeting of the Association after the organization of the Red Creek Association. All the ten churches remaining were represented.

Obviously there were some serious reservations in the minds of the messengers as to the doctrinal soundness and intentions of the State Baptist Convention representatives who seemed so persistent in their efforts to influence the Association. This resulted in a committee being appointed to investigate the work of the State Convention so as to determine whether or not it was advisable to cooperate with its work. It was the thinking of some of the Association's leaders that it was the intention of the State Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention board, to capture the Association. Their suspicions were clearly justified in the years which followed.

The Association met again in annual session with Red Creek Church in Harrison County on Saturday before the 2nd Sunday in October, 1882. There seems to be very little record of this meeting. The same officers as the previous year were chosen.

The annual sessions of the associations were held in late summer or early fall after crops were "laid by," and before harvest time and "hog-killin' time." The churches all held worship only once each month. This allowed a good pastor to have the care of four, five or six churches. The pastors received very little financial assistance from their churches in those days. A reasonable measure of support could be afforded by several churches combined.

Some of the churches had "preaching" service on Saturday. Most of them held their monthly business "conference" on Saturday. A "protracted meeting," or, as some called it, "Big Meetin'" was held at a designated time, always the same week, usually after most of the crops were harvested. This custom has continued in a few rural churches until recent years. The custom was so ingrained in some communities they doubted, it seemed, that one could be "saved" at any other time. And, if one was converted, and made a public profession

of faith, they would have to wait until "Big Meetin' Time" to "join the church" and "be baptized." Some Baptists have been as hide-bound with their traditions and customs as were the Pharisees in the times of Christ on earth. Some have more regard for their traditions and customs than they do for what the Scriptures say. Jesus once asked the scribes and Pharisees: "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?"

"I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" - Psalms 37:25.



Joshua Stockstill (1808-1900) and wife, Emeline (1825-1904), son-in-law and daughter of Elder William H. Varnado. Photo taken in their sunset years, he lived to be 92, and she 79.

CHAPTER X

PROGRESS AND PROBLEMS

The missions and evangelistic outreach of the Hobolochitto Association had now been extended to the west and then to the east of her original base. Two thriving associations of churches - the West Pearl River and the Red Creek - were now well established and exercising a profound influence of their own. The churches of the Hobolochitto after 1880 were mostly in Hancock and south Marion Counties.

From the early 1880's to the beginning of the 20th century was a time of progress and problems. The country was experiencing marked political, social and commercial change. After much talk and political maneuvering influenced by the mostly anglo-saxon Baptists and Protestant citizenry, Pearl River County was finally chartered by act of the State legislature in 1890. The new county was carved from Hancock and Marion Counties. Additional territory from northwest Hancock County was made a part of Pearl River County in 1908 to make it the third largest county in the state. During these years commercial interest was, in a large measure, diverted from the river ports to new communities established along the newly constructed New Orleans and Northeastern Railroad; later known as the Southern Railroad.

The survey for the N. O. & N. E. Railroad was started in 1879. The great construction project from then until early 1884 brought more people, work and money to the area. A number of new towns and communities sprang up along the route of the railroad - Nicholson, known first as Cresent City and Pearl; Picayune, first called Baily Switch; Lacy, later named Carriere; McNeill, Derby, Richardson, Millard, Poplarville, Lumberton, Hillsdale, Ozona, Tyler Switch, Wilco and others.

Captain W. H. Hardy, an enthusiastic and dedicated Baptist layman, Christian gentleman, and builder of railroads in Mississippi, built the N. O. & N. E. Hattiesburg was named for his wife, Hattie. The entire state was painfully but gradually overcoming the federally imposed reconstruction hardships. The small existing churches and their pastors were on the look-out for challenge and opportunity to meet the evangelistic and missionary needs throughout what they considered a vast rapidly developing area. As a result of such spiritual fervency, the gospel was being proclaimed, souls were being saved, and new churches were appearing on the scene.

From 1830 to 1884 people living in the area now known as Picayune had to go to Hobolochitto to get their mail. A post office was chartered at Nicholson in 1884. The first post office for Picayune was not chartered until 1890. When the railroad first began operation

through old Hancock, and later, Pearl River County, Picayune was first known as "Bailey Switch" after a man named Bailey who operated a turpentine business in the area of what is now west Picayune. The railroad provided a side switch to accomodate shipment of turpentine.

A CHURCH FOR PICAYUNE

Soon after the completion of the survey of the N. O. & N. E. Railroad which was begun in 1879, construction gangs, as they were called, soon moved into the area south of Hobolochitto Creek. The construction crew camps and surrounding community to become known as Bailey Switch, and later, Picayune, destined to be Pearl River County's largest city, had as its first permanent homesteader, a Baptist preacher by the name of Thaddeus B. Mitchell. The pioneer minister owned the tract of land, a part of which was later known as the home of the S. B. Whitfield family. In 1879, according to a story published in the old Poplarville Free Press in more recent years, the railroad survey would cross the homestead tract owned by Mr. Mitchell. He would not agree to sell the right of way until the railroad agreed to establish a station and stop the trains. The agreement, it was said, was written into the deed. Thus, Eld. Thad B. Mitchell rightfully has the distinction of being Picayune's first citizen and its first pastor, as he later led, with the help of W. H. Varnado, in establishing its first church. When the history of Picayune is written, it must begin with the Baptist and Bailey Switch.

Due to the demands of a general population increase in the area, together with the families of railroad construction workers, a small frame building was hastily erected which served the community for both a school and place of worship. It was Eld. Thad Mitchell who moved with dispatch to establish a preaching mission with preaching services conducted once a month. With the cooperation of the school teacher, a "Sunday School" was organized. With most of the records lost, the date is not certain, but in the early part of the year 1882, a church was formally constituted and given the Biblical name of Antioch Baptist Church. Thad Mitchell, it is believed, was its first pastor. Older people yet living in the Picayune area who remembers attending the old Antioch School, say that a second frame building was erected some years later a short distance to the east. The old Antioch school was Picayune's first school. It is not known for sure who the first teacher was. Named among those who taught at Antioch during those early years are James G. Sibley, a Methodist minister who later became a Baptist minister; George Holcomb, Thomas J. Weaver, later a prominent attorney-at-law; C. M. White; and J. E. Stockstill, also a prominent attorney-at-law. Sometime after the beginning of the 20th

century the school was moved into the Moses Cook Masonic Lodge building a short distance to the south at a location now known as the junction of North Haugh Avenue and Second Street. It is believed the school remained quartered in the masonic lodge building until permanent facilities were erected about three city blocks to the north where the present Eastside Elementary School at 500 North Haugh Avenue is located.

We hasten to note as it seemed providential that all those early school teachers of Picayune were men of great Christian character. They valued the work of the churches, and held a profound reverence and respect for the Word of God. As previously noted, Eld. James Gordon Sibley, a Methodist, was converted to the Baptist faith and baptized by Eld. Hardy Smith into the fellowship of Union Baptist Church. Sibley later pastored many churches in the area, including Antioch, Union, Henleyfield, Pine Grove, Napoleon, Logtown, Bethel and others. He also taught school at other area schools including Anner and Aaron Academy. Professor George Holcomb was an outstanding citizen and Christian gentleman, as were Dan Stevenson and John Croft. T. J. Weaver and J. E. Stockstill, both Baptists and prominent attorneys-at-law in Pearl River County; and the esteemed "Professor" C. M. White, a Baptist Bible teacher, educator and Christian gentleman of impeccable character, were all numbered among Picayune's first public school teachers.

SIBLEY PRAYED AT A PUBLIC HANGING

One of those old Antioch school teachers who also pastored the Antioch church, and other churches in Pearl River, Hancock and Marion Counties, James Gordon Sibley, became widely known and remembered as the man who led prayer at the public hanging in Columbia on February 7, 1894, of a 22 year old young man by the name of Will Purvis, who was convicted for murder. Purvis proclaimed his innocence to the very last, and believed he would never hang for a crime he did not commit. Sibley prayed while the large gathering stood in stunned silence listening intently. It was said his trembling voice rang out in clarion tones asking God to spare the life of this man if he was not guilty. After the prayer, Purvis stood hooded on the gallows. The trap was released, and he dropped to the earth while the frayed rope swung loose in the air.

An attempt to put Purvis back on the gallows was thwarted when Preacher Sibley cried out: "You cannot hang him again. That is against the law!" The crowd was with Sibley. They believed! Purvis was carried back to jail. After two later attempts to hang him, his sentence was commuted to life in prison. He remained in the state penitentiary until the man who actually committed the murder confess-

ed it on his deathbed, and Purvis was released.

I can well remember, as a small boy, hearing Will Purvis relate his life story at the old Fornea Theatre on West Canal Street in Picayune before he died October 13, 1938.

My mother and father used to tell of the numerous times "Brother Sibley" stayed over night in our old home on Walker Hill in the Jackson Landing community. Brother J. G. Sibley, as he was so well known in this area in times past, was the father of Mrs. Ocie Harris of Picayune. He passed away at Del Rio, Texas, February 1, 1909. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" James 5:16.

W. W. MITCHELL, PASTOR AND POLITICIAN

Elder W. W. "Bill" Mitchell, pastor of old Antioch, and clerk of the Hobolochitto Association from 1886 to 1894, was the son of Eld. Thad B. Mitchell, Picayune's first citizen homesteader and church leader. Bill Mitchell was not only an outstanding minister in Picayune's early history, he served as Circuit Clerk of Pearl River County for 12 years. He defeated Theo G. Bilbo for the position in a heated political campaign in 1903. This was Bilbo's first political race. Bilbo was licensed by his church to preach, but never ordained to pursue his ministry. He later chose to study law and pursue a political career which brought him both success and fame. It was thought that perhaps his defeat by Bill Mitchell was enough Baptist preacher to do for the rest of his life.

FIRST TO EVANGELIZE PICAYUNE

It was through the fervent evangelist ministry of Antioch that the Baptists were the first to bring the gospel message to Picayune. Antioch was Picayune's only church until 1904 when a new Baptist church was organized, and later took the name of "First Baptist Church." Historically, Antioch was Picayune's first church of any kind. The white frame structure, Antioch's last house of worship, stood at the southwest corner of the old cemetery on Eight Street at the north end of Blanks Avenue until about 1934. At that time the old structure was dismantled ostensibly to be replaced by a new building which was never constructed. The cemetery was cleaned up, the old fence taken down and the church house torn down as a part of a project to create labor for a WPA work project.

According to Mr. Henry Howard and other members living about 1942 and 1943, several factors contributed to the demise of the old church. The nation-wide economic depression of the early 1930's was one cause, it was pointed out. In the development of the city over

the years, a rather large negro section, known as "Baylous Quarters," grew up between the church and the center of town. Some wanted to relocate the church, but agreement on the matter was never reached. Many of the members had by now transferred their membership to the more favorably situated First Baptist Church. Finally, with their membership reduced to few in number, the old building in a rather bad state of repair, was demolished to make way for a new building which was never built. Thus, old Antioch, Picayune's first church, near the brushy banks of the meandering Hobolochitto, ceased to be. It was a sad and heart-rending experience to many. It marked the end of an era for Picayune and its religious life. The church had grown up with the town. It was very much a part of the life of the community for some fifty-two years - from 1882 to 1934.

Old Antioch was never officially disbanded. Some of the members including some of the Howards, Mitchells, Laniers and others were received into the fellowship of a new church organized on East Canal Street in Picayune in 1945 under the leadership of this writer. The new church, a mission church from the Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Picayune, was given the name of Antioch to memorialize the name of historic old Antioch, the city's first church.

As a teen-age boy, the author fondly recalls passing the old church on his happy way to the old "Antioch swimmin' hole" on Hobolochitto Creek, or "Boley," as we called it, just down the hill back of the church and cemetery.

On the church roll could be found such names of pioneer families familiar to this area of present as well as by-gone days. Such names as Mitchell, Warden, Harris, Tate, Howard, McGehee, Herrin, Culpepper, Davis, Dilliard, Stockstill, Varnado, Gray, Watts, Bennett, Smith, Lanier, Sherrer, Moody, Kindrick, Jackson, Mahan, Craddock, Wheat and others.

Among those stalwart pastors who led the church through the years in addition to Thad Mitchell and "Uncle Billy" Varnado, were James P. Johnston, missionary of the old General Association of Baptist Churches in Mississippi; Thomas Dossett, James G. Sibley, Pembrook Mitchell, James Q. Sones, E. R. Boone, B. S. Penton and A. Jack Spiers.

Old Antioch always cooperated zealously in the work of the Hobolochitto Association, as did all the churches of this area until about 1897 and 1898 when some began supporting the work of the Southern Baptist Convention. This resulted in a division of the Association in 1901. Afterward, Antioch, and all the churches which refused to cooperate with the work of the "Convention Board," or its state or local affiliates, were somewhat derisively referred to as "Landmark" Baptists, with apparent reference to an Old Testament scripture passage, Proverbs 22:28, which says: "Remove not the ancient landmark which your fathers have set." This, it was said, was due to

the vehement protest and rejection by these churches of any and all changes they considered "unscriptural." Churches throughout the South who rejected the "Convention" system of work were generally referred to as "Landmarkers."

With the development and progress of the City of Picayune has come many fine churches. Commensurate to the zeal which established Antioch, the Baptists are more in number than all others combined. While old Antioch and the zenith of her glory in the service of Christ lingers only as a memory to so many, yet the history of Picayune can never be accurately recorded apart from her name; her ministry; and her influence.

A CHURCH FOR POPLARVILLE

It seems reasonably certain that the Poplarville Baptist Church, some years later named First Baptist Church of Poplarville, was constituted in 1882. This was, according to one source, about the time the community adopted the name, "Poplarville," after "Poplar Jim" Smith, who was the community's first settler.

Poplarville Church was received into the fellowship of the Hobolochitto Association in 1883, along with Antioch in Picayune, Hickory Creek in northeast Pearl River County and Sones Chapel north of McNeill.

The 1883 session of the Association convened with Gainesville Church October 13-15. Eld. Thomas Price preached the introductory message from John 15:15. A. M. Slaydon was moderator; Thad B. Mitchell, clerk; and H. W. Stockstill, treasurer.

The Sones Chapel Baptist Church was organized in a small one-room log school house July 15, 1882, under the leadership of Elder J. I. Hill, who was also a charter member. He served as pastor until 1889. His daughter, Elizabeth, was the wife of Gideon Lumpkin, a deacon of Sones Chapel for many years. Brother Hill and his wife, we were told, were the first to be buried in Sones Chapel cemetery. A large number of Bro. Hill's descendants are members of the old church, and have been through the years since the founding of the church.

Charter members of Sones Chapel Church are Eld. J. I. Hill, Mrs. J. I. Hill, Mrs. F. B. Sones, Lott Smith, Nancy Lee, Marion Smith and Helen Caroline Sones. The present lovely house of worship is located where earlier buildings stood before, in the Sones Chapel community near Hobolochitto Creek where hundreds of believers have been baptized into the fellowship of the historic church.

Brother Harry B. Sones, son of the late Eld. James Q. Sones, lists the following pastors of the church from 1882 to the present: J. I. Hill, Thad B. Mitchell, J. A. Harper, A. M. Slaydon, J. M. Sammons,

Thomas Dossett, James Quitman Sones, C. P. Toney, G. H. Byrd, Houston Rawls, Curtis Nobles, Donnie Allums and Joe Cofield.

Sones Chapel is regarded as one of the great rural churches of south Mississippi. The spiritual impact of its ministry has been felt throughout this section of the country.

JIM THE BAPTIST

James Quitman "Jim" Sones, for forty-six years pastor of Sones Chapel Baptist Church, was respected by all who knew him as one of more dynamic gospel preachers of south Mississippi and southeast Louisiana.

An interesting book, "Jim the Baptist," on the life and labors of Elder J. Q. Sones, by Harry B. Sones, states that his father, J. Q. Sones, was pastor of Sones Chapel Church for 46 years. This stands, we believe, as a record in Pearl River County for pastoral tenure. This speaks well for both the church and the pastor. For most of these many years Sones Chapel and most other rural churches were part-time. Bro. Sones also pastored State Line Baptist Church for 23 years -from 1905 to 1928. The State Line Church was constituted September 27, 1856.

J. Q. Sones was a man of prayer. He prayed lots - privately and in public. The author has heard him pray many times. He was definitely one of the outstanding gospel preachers and expounders of the Word of God in the South. He demonstrated a dogged determination to preach his convictions. He was a gentle but very courageous man. He was humble but never afraid to declare the whole counsel of God. He was often heard to say, "We must stand for the truth in love."

Jim Sones and his good wife, Alma Ball, raised a large family of twelve - nine boys and three girls. The oldest son, Elder John Warren Sones, a noble preacher of God's Word, has been a faithful pastor and missionary in Mississippi and Louisiana for many years. A daughter, Dora Lee, married Buford Walker, and older brother of the author.

Churches pastored by Jim Sones were Sones Chapel, 1904-1950; State Line, 1905-1928; Antioch, Picayune, 1906-1909; Old Palestine, 1912-1919, Pine Grove, Washington Parish, La., 1910-1912; Union Avenue, Bogalusa, La., 1914-1925; Cedar Grove, 1919-1921; West Union, 1916-1920; Myrtle Grove, 1914-1915; Monroe's Creek, La., 1912-1916; Red Creek, 1926-1938; Hickory Creek, 1930-1943; Zion Hill, 1928-1930; Pine, La., 1916-1920; Oak Grove, 1926-1928; Mill Creek,

1927-1930; Mineral Springs, 1948-1950. He was clerk of the Hobolochitto Association eight or nine years -from 1902-1905; 1911; 1924-1926. He served as moderator more times than any other man -22 or 23 times from 1914-1919; 1927-1943; 1947. He was held in high esteem by all who knew him. He was respected by friends and foes alike. All did not always agree with him, but all did respect him. He was always strongly opposed to the "Convention" system of work and what he considered, other human innovations among Baptists.

Zion Hill was host to the association meeting in 1884. It is not known for certain where the 1885 annual session was held. Thomas Price was moderator and T. J. Mitchell, clerk, for the sixth and last time. The 1886 session was with Juniper Grove. Eld. Thomas Price was elected moderator. Eld. Andrew Slaydon brought the introductory message.

The 31st annual session convened with Red Creek Church in Harrison County October 8-10, 1887. The opening message was brought by Eld. J. B. Flanagan. Others who preached during this session were J. W. Tolar, J. I. Hill, W. J. Walker and Thad Mitchell. Corresponding messengers from Red Creek Association were Eld. John Williams, Eld. W. J. Walker, E. B. Cox, Nathan Lott and Jesse Breland. From the West Pearl River was J. W. Tolar.

Eld. J. B. Flanagan was elected moderator. Eld. W. W. "Bill" Mitchell, son of Eld. Thad B. Mitchell, was elected clerk. He served as clerk of the Hobolochitto from 1887 to 1894. The April 24, 1919, issue of the Poplarville Free Press tells the story of preacher Bill Mitchell's election to the office of Circuit Clerk of Pearl River County in 1903. How he handily defeated Theo. G. Bilbo, and served in the political office for the following twelve years. It is said that preacher Bill Mitchell was the only man ever to defeat Bilbo in Pearl River County.

A rising tide of interest in missions was much in evidence at the 1887 session. A special report was heard on foreign missions. The minutes of the Association show that other reports heard at the meeting included Education, Sabbath School, Temperance and Publications.

Napoleon Baptist Church was organized and petitioned the Association for fellowship in 1887.

Other churches constituted and coming into the fellowship of the Hobolochitto by 1900 included Pearlington and Little River in 1888, at the meeting at Union Church at Caesar.

The Minutes of the Pearl River County Association list the dates of organization of the following churches which came into the Hobolochitto prior to 1900: Crane Creek, 1886; Ford Creek, 1892; Harmony, 1897; New Palestine, 1898; White Sand, 1894.

The Minutes of the Association of 1888 records the following motion: "On motion, that Gainesville Church be received under the new name of Corinth." The old Gainesville Church established at old Gainesville in 1855 had moved a few miles north and erected a small house of worship on Turtleskin Creek.

Newly constituted churches had increased in number in the 1880's and 1890's. Hickory Springs Church was organized, according to some sources, on April 6, 1883. There are some who differ with this date. The church is located on Wolf Creek in what is now the Progress community east of Poplarville. A story on the church in the old Poplarville Free Press list the following as charter members: Eld. and Mrs. A. J. Frye, Mr. and Mrs. C. F. Frye, Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Odom, Miss Sarah Odom, Miss Rachel Odom, Miss Louise Odom, Mr. and Mrs. G. W. Smith, Sr., Mr. and Mrs. J. I. Broadus, Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Head, Mr. and Mrs. R. Ladner, Mr. and Mrs. Elijah Ladner and Mr. and Mrs. A. M. Beall, Sr. It is said the church was established under the leadership of Elders A. J. Frye and Thomas Price.

Just when if ever the church was in the Hobolochitto Association is not known for certain. It did cooperate with the old Red Creek Association for many years. As a matter of fact, the church worked enthusiastically with them until the Red Creek left the regular state and national associated work in the late 1940's.

The 1888 session of the Hobolochitto met with Union at Caesar. Eld. Abner Walker was elected moderator. He also preached the introductory sermon. Eld. W. W. Mitchell was re-elected clerk. Eighteen churches represented.

Ministers and their post offices listed in the minutes of 1887 and 1888 were as follows: W. H. Varnado, Lacy; T. D. Bush, Poplarville; Thomas Price, Hillsdale; J. B. Flanagan, Richardson; A. M. Slaydon, Derby; R. N. Davis, Hillsdale; Thad B. Mitchell, Richardson; Roland E. Burks, Chinquepin; Abner Walker, Aria; R. R. Breland, Lacy; A. J. Frye, Poplarville; R. L. King, Richardson; W. W. Mitchell, Kiln; J. I. Hill, Derby; J. A. Smith, Poplarville.

Spring Hill Church was host to the 1889 session of the Association. Eld. Andrew M. Slaydon was chosen moderator for the ninth and last time he was to preside over the body. The minutes noted that Bro. Slaydon's mailing address had been changed to McClure, Mississippi. Eld. W. W. Mitchell, the clerk's address was Stocksdale, Mississippi. It was reported that J. M. Smith had been licensed to preach.

The messengers of the churches were convened with Corinth (old Gainesville) for the 1890 annual session. Organization of the body resulted in the election of Eld. J. B. Flanagan, moderator; W. W. Mitchell, clerk. Eld. R. N. Davis brought the opening message from John 14:18 - "I will not leave you comfortless: . . ." The listeners were moved by the powerful preaching of Bro. Davis. There was praise and

shouting by many. It was a common experience at Baptist meetings in those days to see people shed tears of joy and shout the praises of God.

Pleasant Hill Church was received into the Association with her lone messenger, Eld. Thomas Dossett. Pine Grove Church had suffered adversity. It reported at the 1890 session that it had "re-organized with 27 members" in October, 1889.

Obviously certain salesmen and photographers had made themselves a nuisance at the associational meetings. The following resolutions was found in the minutes of the 1890 session: "On account of disturbances caused by persons selling, and photographers, near the Association grounds, therefore, be it resolved:

"1—That the Hobolochitto Association forbid any of the kind coming nearer than two miles of the places of meeting during her sessions."

Old tin-type photography was probably something new and popular at the time: The Association meetings were usually well attended. This kind of gathering afforded an unusual opportunity for photographers to make and sell pictures. According to some old-timers, it is believed that some of the "salesmen" may have been dispensing distilled spirits.

The Association held its 1891 session with Pine Grove at Yamacraw. The minutes show that Eld. Andrew M. Slaydon preached the "introductory" sermon from Matthew 7:13-14 - "Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in there at; because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." It was a stirring message; the kind, it was said, "he always preached." By request of the brethren, he preached again at the close of the meeting on Sunday. It was his last time to bring the opening associational message.

A high point in the associational meetings in those days was receiving and arranging correspondance with other Associations "of like faith and order." Eld. J. W. Tolar was received as a corresponding messenger from the Bethel Association; Eld. A. J. Seal from the West Pearl River; Eld. Abner Walker from the Red Creek; and Eld. J. B. Flanagan from the General (State) Association. The Hobolochitto voted to "re-open" correspondence with the Pearl River Association.

A resolution was adopted by the messengers composing the 1891 session of the Hobolochitto at Pine Grove, authorizing Elders A. M. Slaydon and T. B. Mitchell to "write a history of the Baptist within the bounds of this (Hobolochitto) and the West Pearl River Associations, and report at the next session of the body." As far as the author has ever known, no such history was written then nor at any time since. Elder Hardy Smith, who dearly loved the Hobolochitto Association,

and its labor for the Lord, indicated on several occasions that he planned to compile at least a brief history sketch of the Association, but never did.

The minutes of 1891 noted that "Bro. Newton Breland, Anner, Miss., had been licensed to preach." Elder J. B. Flanagan's new post office address was Milton, Miss.

Churches represented were Antioch, Bethel, Crane Creek, Corinth, Caney, Henleyfield, Juniper Grove, Little River, Napoleon, Poplarville, Pine Grove, Palestine, Pearlington, Pleasant Hill, Red Creek, Sones Chapel, Spring Hill, Union and Zion Hill. The churches reported 101 baptisms for the year; 41 received by letters; 31 dismissed by letters; seven restored to membership; 20 excluded; and nine deceased. The nineteen churches reported a total of 1,015 members. Nine of the churches were from Hancock County, eight from Pearl River, one from Marion and one from Harrison County.

The 36th annual session was held with Bethel Church in Pearl River County, "thirty-five miles south of Columbia, on River road, to begin on Saturday before the second Sunday in October, 1892." Eld. J. B. Flanagan got the service off on a fervent note with the introductory message from John 19:7 as his text.

Twenty churches with messengers, often referred to in the minutes as "delegates," were listed as follows: Antioch, Picayune, J. M. Davis and G. W. Mitchell; Bethel, J. A. Stuart and F. M. Lowe; Crane Creek, J. M. Bounds; Corinth (no messengers); Caney, J. L. Bryant; Ford's Creek, W. M. Cameron and E. Byrd; Henleyfield, J. R. Burks and W. Stockstill; Juniper Grove, A. M. Slaydon and A. J. Smith; Little River, J. J. McArthur and R. Moss; Napoleon, W. W. Bennett; Poplarville, T. R. White; Pine Grove, G. W. Walker; Palestine, T. J. Stockstill and W. W. Mitchell; Pearlington (no messengers); Pleasant Hill, T. Dossett and B. D. Mitchell; Red Creek, J. Price and C. A. Herrington; Sones Chapel J. I. Hill and T. R. Sones; Spring Hill, R. N. Davis and J. M. Smith; Union, J. B. Flanagan and N. Breland; Zion Hill, J. M. Spiers and J. Spiers.

The body approved correspondence with Red Creek, West Pearl River, Bethel, Pearl River and General Associations.

"On motion of Elder N. Breland that we open correspondence with the Baptist State Convention; on motion of clerk the motion was tabled to come up the first business on Monday morning."

The minutes show the motion to take from the table the question of correspondence with the State Convention lost by a vote of 20 to 7. The body, by this vote, refused to correspond with the State Baptist Convention.

While each day brought its own challenges and changes; its joys and cares; its blessings and burdens; its trials and triumphs, the chur-

ches had enjoyed great harmony in their labors together since the first few churches were constituted in the 1840's. Christian love had bound them together in a common bond through trailblazing frontier hardships, war and its aftermath. What all these failed to do might now be accomplished through some religious ideologies which had captured the thinking of a few men whose sympathies were evidently with the work of the Southern and State Baptist Convention had been appearing at the Hobolochitto meetings from time to time since the early 1880's. Those who opposed the "Convention" work and its principles had prevailed. But the seeds of division had been sown. Suspicion was now becoming discord. It was believed that ministers as well as the laymen were being pressured to cooperate with the State Baptist Convention. Those opposing were equally as adamant in their opposition. The two sides of the issue were now becoming polarized.

As you may remember, a committee had been appointed at the annual session in 1881 to investigate the State Baptist Convention. The committee brought a report favorable to the work of the "convention" which was submitted at the annual session a year or two later. The report, obviously did not settle the matter.

There is not much record of the 1893 session which met with Little River Baptist Church. J. B. Flanagan was elected moderator; W. W. Mitchell, clerk. W. W. Mitchell preached the annual introductory sermon.

Union Baptist Church at old Caesar was host to the 38th annual session October 13-15, 1894.

The following is copied from page one of the minutes of the 1894 session of the Association:

"The introductory sermon was preached by Elder Newton Breland, from the latter clause of the 5th verse of the 17th chapter of Matthew: "Hear ye Him."

"After an intermission of thirty minutes, the Delegates assembled in the house, sang a hymn, and were led in prayer by Elder J. P. Culpepper.

"Elders Felix Daughdrill and A. J. Frye were appointed to preach at the stand.

"The Association was called to order by the Moderator, J. B. Flanagan.

"Elder A. M. Slaydon and Brother J. J. McArthur were appointed reading clerks.

"All the churches were represented.

"Brothers J. M. Smith, J. M. Bilbo and R. Moss were appointed a committee on Finance.

"Elder Newton Breland and Brothers Thomas Dossett and S. J. Seal were appointed a committee on Request.

"Petitionary Letters were called for, and Mt. Pizgah, White Sand and Mission Ridge churches presented letters by their delegates, whose names appear in the Statistical Table. The Moderator extended the right hand of fellowship, and invited them to seats with us.

"The Association then went into the election of officers for the ensuing year. Brothers J. J. Thornhill and A. J. Smith were appointed tellers. The result was as follows, viz: J. B. Flanagan, Moderator; J. M. Bilbo, Treasurer; J. J. McArthur, Clerk.

"By request of the Moderator, the Rules of Decorum, and the Objects and Powers of the Association were read by Elder A. M. Slaydon."



Hay's Creek, formerly known as Half-Moon Bluff Baptist Church, constituted October 12, 1812, on Bogue Chitto River in Washington Parish, is the first and oldest Baptist church in the state of Louisiana. The historic church cooperated in the work of the Hobolochitto Association before 1870.

MINUTES -

OF THE

THIRTY FIRST

ANNUAL SESSION,

OF THE

Hebdochitto Baptist Assoc'n,

HELD WITH

RED CREEK CHURCH,

HARRISON CO., Miss.,

October 8, 9 and 10, 1887.

OFFICERS.

J. B. FLANAGAN, MODERATOR,

NEWTON BRELAND, TREASURER,

W. W. MITCHELL, CLERK.

We further state that the public contribution on Sunday amounted to \$14.15 for home missions, and \$9.25 for foreign missions. We recommend the continuation of a Home Mission Board. We further state that the work south of the Association is suspended for the present. We herewith tender the Missionary's report.

Respectfully submitted,

ABNER WALKER,

Chairman.

W. W. MITCHELL, Sec.

"I"—MISSIONARY.

To the Executive Board of the Hobolochitto Association:

DEAR BRETHREN:—I again prepare to meet you with my final report. I have spent forty-four days, preached sixty-five sermons, and traveled five hundred and fifty miles, and baptized thirty two; attended, in your bounds, two churches, which have restored two members. I have organized one church, assisted in the ordination of one deacon.

I herewith tender my resignation as missionary, as the care of so many churches will take all my time.

Respectfully submitted,

J. B. FLANAGAN,

Missionary.

ORDAINED MINISTERS AND THEIR POSTOFFICES.

W. H. Varnado	Lacey	T. D. Bush..	Poplarville,
Thomas Price.. ...	Hillsdale	J. B. Flanagan....	Richardson,
A. M. Slaydon.....	Derby,	R. N. Davis.....	Hillsdale,
T. B. Mitchell...Richardson,		Roland Burk.....	Chinquepin,
J. A. Smith. ...	Poplarville,	Abner Walker	Aria,
R. R. Breland,.....	Lacey,	J. I. Hill	Derby,
A. J. Fry,	Poplarville,	W. W. Mitchell	Kiln,
		R. L. King, Richardson.	

All of the above-named postoffices are in Mississippi.

— O —

RULES OF DECORUM.

1. This Association shall consist of delegates chosen by the churches to which they respectively belong, and shall be styled "THE HOBOLOCHITTO BAPTIST ASSOCIATION."

2. Such members shall be members in good standing, and no member under church censure shall be allowed a seat in this Association.

3. They shall produce letters certifying their appointment by their respective churches, stating the number baptized, received by letter, restored, dismissed, excommunicated and deceased during the preceding associational year, with total number in fellowship, and such other statistical matter as the Association may direct.

4. This Association shall have a Moderator and Clerk, who shall be annually chosen by a majority of the members present; said Moderator and Clerk shall fill their places, if present, at the succeeding Association till a new election takes place; and, while in office, shall discharge the duties ordinarily incident to those offices.

5. If new churches desire to be admitted into the Association, they shall petition by letter and delegates; and, if orthodox and orderly, shall be received, and the Moderator shall recognize them by giving their delegates the right hand of fellowship in behalf of the body.

6. Every church shall be allowed two delegates, and no more, until her number shall reach one hundred; and one delegate for every fifty members thereafter, until she may have four delegates and no more.

7. The Association shall neither answer, or debate any query on gospel doctrine, except it be merely to explain the meaning of the Articles of Faith of this Association.

8. Every motion, made in order, and seconded, shall be reduced to writing, if requested by any member, and shall be considered by the Association, except withdrawn by the mover before discussion.

9. Motions made and lost shall not be recorded on the minutes unless ordered at the time.

10. If any proposition, or motion under debate, contain two or more points, it shall be divided at the request of any member, and the vote taken on each point separately.

11. Only one member shall speak at the same time, who shall rise from his seat and address the Moderator; he shall confine himself to the subject properly in debate; cast no reflections on the Association, or any member thereof, and shall not be interrupted while speaking.

12. No person shall speak more than three times on the same subject without leave of the Association.

13. The Moderator shall have the privilege of speaking on any question in debate, the chair being previously filled. He shall rise from his seat to put the question to the body.

14. The Moderator shall decide questions of order, but an appeal from such decisions may be taken to the whole body, which shall be decided without debate.

15. A majority of the members present shall be necessary to carry any motion or proposition, and the moderator shall vote as other members when the question is taken; and in case of a tie, the question shall again be put to the Association, and if not then decided the Moderator shall proceed to decide the matter in controversy by act.

16. Committees shall be nominated by the Moderator, subject to the approval of the Association.

17. There shall be no talking or whispering while a brother is speaking.

18. No member shall finally depart from the Association, without leave of the body.

19. The names of the delegates shall be enrolled by the clerk, and called over whenever thought necessary.

20. The minutes shall be read and carefully corrected, if necessary, and signed by the Moderator and clerk before the Association rises.

21. A motion for final adjournment shall be construed to involve the previous reading and adjustment of the minutes.

22. The Association shall be opened and closed by prayer.

23. Immediately after the organization of the Association, the rules of order shall be distinctly read by order of the Moderator.

24. The foregoing articles shall be subject to alteration and amendment at any regular meeting of the Association, by a majority of the Association.

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Minutes of ARTICLES OF FAITH.
1887 PREAMBLE.

We, the Churches of Jesus Christ, who have been regularly baptized upon a profession of our faith, are convinced of the utility of a combination of churches, and of maintaining a cor-

respondence for the preservation of union among churches of the same faith and order. We, therefore, agree to form ourselves into an Association upon the following principles, viz:

1. We believe in one triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; the same in essence, equal in power and glory.

2. We believe that the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and are the only rule of faith and practice.

3. We believe in the fall of Adam from his original rectitude; in the imputation of his sin to all of his posterity; in the total depravity of human nature, and in man's inability to restore himself to the favor of God.

4. We believe that God has loved His people with an everlasting love; that He chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world; that He calls them with a holy and effectual calling; and being justified alone through the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

5. We believe there is one mediator between God and men; the man Christ Jesus, who, by the satisfaction he made to law and justice in becoming an offering for sin, but, by his most precious blood, redeemed the elect from under the curse of the law, that they might be holy and without blame before him in love.

6. We believe that good works are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification and the evidences of a gracious state; and that all believers are bound to obey God from a principle of love.

7. We believe in the resurrection of the dead and a general judgment; that the happiness of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked will be everlasting.

— — —
GOSPEL ORDER.

*Minutes 1
1887*

1. We believe that a visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful persons who have given themselves to the Lord, and to one another in brotherly covenant to keep up a godly discipline agreeable to the rules of the New Testament.

2. We believe that Jesus Christ is the only head and law-giver of his church; that the government is with the body,

the church, and is equally the right and privilege of each member thereof.

3. We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are gospel ordinances, appointed by Jesus Christ, and to be continued in his church until his second coming.

4. We believe that immersion only is baptism, and that believers in Christ are the only proper subjects.

5. We believe that none but regularly baptized members have a right to partake of the Lord's Supper.

6. We believe that it is the duty and privilege of all believers to make a public profession of their faith, and to submit to the ordinances of the gospel and give themselves as members to the visible church.

7. We believe it to be the duty of every church to expel from her communion every member that is immoral in conduct, or that holds doctrines contrary to the Scriptures.

OBJECTS AND POWERS OF THE ASSOCIATION.

1. This Association acknowledges and maintains that each church is an independent body, and possesses the sole right to exercise and control its own affairs; and, therefore, this Association has no right or power to interfere with the internal rights and privileges of churches composing its body, but may withdraw from any church which may hold false doctrines or tolerate immoral practices.

2. The object of this Association shall be to promote fellowship and harmony among the churches; to inquire into difficulties between churches, and remove them, if possible; to give the churches the best advice it can in difficult matters, when solicited; and, in general, to advance the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom in any way it may deem practicable.

3. With regard to benevolent institutions in our country, we declare it to be the inalienable right of every association, of every church, or individual member of a church, to support them, or not to support them, according to the dictates of their own conscience; and their right shall never be called in question in this Association; and any motion whereby this right is called in question, shall be instantly ruled out by the Moderator as being unconstitutional.

4. This Association may maintain a friendly correspond-

From Minutes 1 1887

STATISTICAL TABLE.

ence, when convenient, with other religious bodies of the same faith and order.

5. Ministers of the gospel in good standing, though not delegates, may be invited to seats in the Association, but not to have the privilege of voting.

6. The Association may appoint any person or persons, by and with their consent, to transact any business it may deem necessary.

7. The Association may adjourn to any time and place it may think proper.

8. The Association shall keep a record of its proceedings, and have them printed when necessary.

9. The Association shall have a fund, and elect a treasurer, annually, to take charge of it, who shall account to the Association for all money which shall come into his hands for the use of the Association.

10. The Association may form its own by-laws, and regulate its own proceedings in such manner as it may think expedient.

The clerks of the churches of this Association will please send in their statistical table all money collected from their churches, and for what purpose it was collected, so that the clerk of the Association can correctly fill out the blank sent by the Baptist Year Book Publishing House.

W. W. MITCHELL.

Note: Pages 99-106 show photos of front cover and pages 8-14 from Minute Book of 1887 which include Rules of Decorum, Articles of Faith, Gospel Order and Objects and powers which governed the Hobolochitto Baptist Association since the early years of the organization.



ZION HILL Baptist Church, constituted in the early part of 1856, the year the Hobolochitto Association was organized. Zion Hill was in the organization of the Hobolochitto. Photo above is the present, and fifth house of worship, made about time it was completed several years ago. Photo below is believed to be that of the fourth building. Pictures of previous buildings were not available.

CHAPTER XI

“A PRINCE IS FALLEN.”

Elder William Henry “Uncle Billy” Varnado, having been in declining health for the past two or three years, went to be with the Lord on July 15, 1893. It was a most appropriate occasion to recall the words of David the King concerning death of his friend and servant Abner. “There is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel.”

W. H. Varnado, like Thad B. Mitchell who died two years later in 1895, and A. M. Slaydon who followed them in death in 1898, could say, with the apostle Paul: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” - II Tim. 4:6-8. Truly, it could be said of these men, and their contemporaries: They were “LABORERS TOGETHER WITH GOD.”

The report on “Obituaries” in the minutes of 1893, noted a “resolution referred to this Association from Union church in regard to the death of Elder W. H. Varnado, the oldest pioneer and veteran of the cross in our Association, he being in his ninetieth year.”

Respectfully submitted,
Hardy Smith, Chairman

Resolutions adopted by Union church at her September meeting, 1893:

Whereas, It hath pleased our Heavenly Father in his infinite wisdom to call home to rest his aged servant and our beloved brother, Elder W. H. Varnado, as we trust to wear the crown of the faithful and to inherit the better land, be it

Resolved, That we tender to the bereaved relatives our heart-felt sympathy, exhorting them to sorrow not, forasmuch as their loss is his eternal gain.

Be it further Resolved, That we cherish and perpetuate his memory by holding fast those cordial doctrines of sacred writ so zealously advocated and defended by our venerable pioneer father for more than fifty years, and the greater part of that spent in our destitution with little and sometimes no remuneration.

Be it further Resolved, That we suggest to the brotherhood generally, and to the Hobolochitto Baptist Association in particular, the propriety of erecting a monument to his memory, and also of having a sketch of his life published for the good of our posterity in this part of the country.

Also be it Resolved, That a copy of these resolutions be entered on the church book, and one be sent to the Association, and that our papers, the Baptist Record and the Mississippi Baptist, be each fur-

nished a copy for publication, also a copy to the widow of the deceased.

J. J. Thornhill,
J. B. Flanagan,
Hardy Smith,
Committee

The following committee was appointed to adopt a plan and ascertain the cost of erecting a monument to the memory of Elder W. H. Varnado, deceased, to-wit: Elders A. M. Slaydon, T. B. Mitchell, J. B. Flanagan, J. M. Sammons, R. N. Davis, R. L. King and Brothers J. O. Bilbo, S. J. McBride, W. W. Self, H. P. Smith, H. L. Pearson and John Stewart.

The committee submitted the following report at the 1896 session of the Association:

"After long, continued and laborious efforts, we have raised a small contribution and purchased a tomb at a cost of \$36, which will identify the grave of one of the most notable men ever put to rest in south Mississippi."

The simple headstone marks his grave in the Varnado cemetery near his old home place along the banks of east Hobolochitto Creek east of McNeill. It reads as follows:

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF REV. W. H. VARNADO, BORN MAR. 5, 1804; DIED JULY 15, 1893.

The first Baptist preacher known to preach in Hancock County, Miss. The great Missionary to this County, He was a Landmark Baptist, believing in and practicing the washing of the Saints feet as taught by our Lord.

Now sweetly he sleeps here alone after 53 years labor in the Master's vineyard, entering the work at about 40 years of age, died in his 91st year but the Lord will raise him up at the last day.

MISSIONS, EDUCATION, PUBLICATIONS

Records of the older churches, as well as the minutes of the Association from its earliest years, reflect great interest in reaching out to the regions beyond through missions, education, church Bible schools, called "sabbath schools" and publications.

"The Mississippi Baptist, the organ of the General Association, . . ." and "The Baptist Record." For "Sabbath School," the publications of the American Baptist Publication Society, published at Philadelphia, Pa., and the Southern Baptist Convention, published at Nashville, Tenn. were recommended by the report on Publications in the 1893 minutes of the Association.

The Churches were being encouraged to organize "Sabbath

Schools" in their churches. We call them "Sunday Schools" church schools or Bible schools in most churches today. The object has always been to give people a working knowledge of the Scriptures.

A resolution noted in the minutes of 1893 says, "Resolved, That the fifth Sunday in October, 1893, be observed as a day of fasting and prayer for the success of the missions work at home and in foreign fields."

A rather lengthly report on missions found in the 1893 minutes encourages the generous support of missionaries at home and in such foreign fields as Spain, Italy, China, Mexico, Japan and Brazil. It also proclaims the need of the gospel being preached in areas where Catholics and Protestants have sown error and superstition.

Minutes of the Association for 1894 listed the following reports submitted: Publications, State of Religion, Temperance, Missions, Ministerial Support, Sabbath Schools and Education in addition to the usual reports of committees on Finance, Obituaries, Report of Executive Board, Resolutions and Treasurer's Report.

Juniper Grove Baptist Church, south of Poplarville, was host to the 39th annual session October 12-14, 1895. Eld. Thomas Dossett preached the introductory sermon. Officers elected were Eld. J. B. Flanagan, moderator; Eld. W. I. Williams, clerk; and J. M. Bilbo, Treasurer.

The Association voted to pay Eld. Thomas Dossett \$1.50 per day for days worked as Associational missionary.

Under "Executive Report," the Board of Missions submitted their report as follows:

"We met and organized at Union Baptist church in December, 1895. We employed Rev. T. Dossett as our missionary for one-half time at \$1.50 per day, and also agreed to supplement Rev. A. M. Slaydon's salary, as pastor of Mission Ridge church, \$3 per month. At our next meeting, held with White Sand church, we made new plans for carrying on our missionary work, and withdrew Rev. T. Dossett from the field. Statistics of his work prior to his removal is as follows: Days spent, 33; sermons preached, 19; miles traveled, 298. We agreed with the committee on colportage to consolidate the colportage work with the missionary and Sunday school work; i.e., all the work to be done by one man. For this work we selected Rev. J. M. Sammons at 96 2-13 cents per day. . . ."

Their report of funds received from 18 churches was as follows: Home Missions, \$89.85; Foreign Missions, \$6.90; Ministerial Education, \$3.80.

"Amount collected by Rev. J. M. Sammons for Home Missions, \$10.85; amount collected by Rev. M. A. Sheppard at Stewart school for Ministerial Education, \$1.35; balance from the Executive Board of

the preceeding year for Home Mission, Board of the preceeding year for Home Mission, \$24.50; returns from books sold by our colporter, \$149.20. Total for Home Missions, \$274.40; total for Ministerial Education, \$5.15; total for Foreign Mission, \$6.90."

"Our Expenses"

"Paid Rev. A. M. Slaydon for six months, \$18; paid Rev. T. Dossett for 33 days, \$49.50; paid Rev. J. M. Sammons for 94 days, \$90.38 6-13; paid Bro. Theo G. Bilbo for postage, 50 cents; cost of books for our colporter, \$122.24; total disbursements, \$280.62. Total indebtedness \$280.62—\$274.40 and \$6.22. Paid W. I. Williams \$4.95, leaving on hand for Ministerial Education, 20 cents. The report of Rev. J. M. Sammons is as follows: sold books to the amount of \$149.20; number of Bibles sold, 49; testaments, 115; religious books other than Bibles and testaments, 80; 241 tracts. Value of books given away, \$3.11. Sermons delivered, 58; prayer meeting addresses, 4; Sunday schools organized, 2; Sunday school addressed, 3. Profits on books sold, about \$40.

"Notwithstanding the great opposition of some of our brethren, the Lord has abundantly blessed us in our work. Therefore, we recommend the continuation of the missionary and colportage work."

N. Breland, President

Theo G. Bilbo, Secretary

The "Board of Missions" as listed in the minutes of the 1896 annual session held with the Caney Baptist Church in Marion County was as follows: Rev. J. G. Sibley, L. B. Parker, Rev. N. Breland, Nelson Mitchell, J. I. Smith, R. Moss, Theo G. Bilbo, H. Patch, Bro. McQueen, Rev. J. B. Flanagan, Luther Walker, James Spiers, Marion Lowe, Rev. A. M. Slaydon, Chas. Wheat, Joe Burge, B. P. Henley, Jesse Davis. Bro. Holden.

Better care for the ministers was being reflected in the churches and at the Assocaition meetings in the 1890's. "Pastor's Salary" was listed in the statistical table for probably the first time in the 1897 minutes.

Care for the aged ministers among the churches was shown in reports on "Sustentation" in the minutes of 1897 and 1898:

"Sustentation, as we understand it, refers to the support of aged and worn out preachers and their wives and dependent children. We are at a loss just what to say on this subject, but we are aware of the fact that something ought to be done. We recomend a collection from our churches as often as may be deemed necessary for this purpose and the money be sent to the treasurer of the Association and disposed of as may be directed by the Board." - Minutes H.B.A. 1897.

"We your committee on Sustentation beg leave to report as follows: A preacher who has worn his life out in the service of the cause ought not to be cast off in his old age and left to spend his declining years

suffering for the bare necessities of life. Even the dictates of a common humanity teaches us better than this. They ought to be cared for for the good they have done, even if they cannot do much now. Gratitude should prompt us to do this. Besides this we should remember that others have labored and we have entered into their labors; that the old pioneer preacher laid the foundation for our present churches. . . ." - Minutes 1898.

MINISTERIAL EDUCATION INTEREST ABOUNDS

Ministerial Education was a much discussed topic in all the churches during the decade of 1890 to 1900. This interest was being demonstrated in the deliberations and recommendations of the church messengers at the annual sessions of the Association.

A special committee on Ministerial Education appointed at the 1896 session of the Association was submitted at the 1897 session held at Anner Baptist Church. The report was presented by Eld. James G. Sibley, a public school teacher and ardent advocate of Christian Education, especially for our ministers.

The following reports and recommendations were noted in the minutes of the Hobolochitto Association for 1898.

"Your standing committee on Ministerial Education begs leave to make the following report, viz.:

"By the help of God and the kindness of friends, we were enabled to place in school and wholly maintain for two and a half months, Eld. W. J. Lott. He attended the high school at Logtown, Miss., where the board of directors generously donated his tuition. . . ."

The following resolution was adopted at the same meeting:

"Resolved, That we adopt L. G. Varnado as our ministerial student, and commend him to our standing committee on Ministerial Education."

Another report on Education submitted at the same, 1898, session, will be of interest on the subject:

"We your committee on Education, beg leave to submit the following: . . .

"Our country abounds today with good schools. At Clinton, this state, is located Mississippi College, and institution of learning for men and boys. It is owned and controlled by our own denomination, and is at present under the management of Dr. W. T. Lowrey, one of the ablest educators of the South. We heartily commend this school to our young men and boys who expect to attend college.

"At Poplarville, Miss., is located a good high school, which offers fine opportunities to our girls and boys alike. This school is presided over by the well-known and popular Prof. W. I. Thames. There is at Logtown, Hancock County, Miss., a splendid high school, presided

over by the efficient Prof. Watt Matthews. This school deserves and should receive a large share of our patronage. We urge all our people to look well to the Christian education of their children."

The report of the committee on Ministerial Education at the 1899 annual session held at Corinth church, states that "Brother L. G. Varnado was in attendance upon the Poplarville High School about four months of the last session, and is now attending the same school. We expect to keep him there during the present session. We have collected during this Associational year \$26. We have paid out \$16, and have on hand \$10.

"We are much pleased," the report stated, "with the reports we have heard of him during the year. . . ."

The 40th annual session was hosted by Caney Baptist Church October 10-12, 1896. The opening message was by Eld. J. L. Bryant. Officers elected were, Eld. J. B. Flanagan, moderator; Eld. W. I. Williams, clerk; and J. M. Bilbo, treasurer.

"Letters from the churches were read and the delegates' names were enrolled as follows:

"Antioch - B. F. Mitchell and Joseph Mitchell; Crane Creek - Rev. C. N. Woodcock; Corinth - J. H. Davis; Caney - Rev. G. W. Burge and F. B. Sones; Ford's Creek - Jeptha Bilbo and Henry Reyer; Henley field - Harvey Burks; Juniper Grove - A. J. Smith and Theo G. Bilbo; Little River - E. F. Williams; Mission Ridge - John Lott; Mt. Pisgah - W. W. Self; Pine Grove - Andrew Stewart; Palestine - Thomas J. Stockstill; Pleasant Hill - Rev. T. Dossett and L. B. Parker; Sones' Chapel - T. R. Sones and J. N. Mitchell; Spring Hill - J. M. Smith and J. M. Bilbo; Union - Revs. J. B. Flanagan and J. G. Sibley, and Bros. J. M. Davis and J. J. Thornhill; White Sand - W. I. Williams and J. A. H. Smith; Zion Hill - J. M. Spiers and J. L. Stockstill; Clear Creek - D. Davis and J. I Cooper.

"Petitionary letters called for and Anner regular Baptist church presented a letter and was received.

"Anner - Rev. N. Breland and Quitman Breland." Corresponding messengers were elected to represent the Association at the following Associations: Red Creek, Bethel, Pearl River, Lebanon, West Pearl River and the General Association.

The Hobolochitto did not elect representation to the State Convention at this session. "On motion, a committee was appointed to investigate and report the Objects and Powers of the State Convention, as follows:

"Rev. J. G. Sibley, M. A. Sheppard, N. Breland and Bro. J. J. Thornhill." -Minutes HBA, 1896.

Obviously, many leaders in the churches vehemently objected to the work of the State Baptist Convention. This being the second such request by the body for an investigation of the principles and objects

and powers of the State Convention.

It was very clear that the committee appointed was men known to be in sympathy with the work of the State Convention.

Men who had been inseparably bound together in their convictions, were now finding themselves on opposing sides of an issue which was audaciously and contempnously imposed upon them. It finally divided the churches and the Association. Those who stood opposed to being taken into the State and Southern Baptist Convention were derisively referred to as "Landmarkers." Those who favored cooperating with the State Convention Board and the Southern Baptist Convention Board were usually referred to as "Conventioners."

Old-timers living forty years ago who could remember "Uncle Billy" Varnado and "Uncle Andy" Slaydon," who pioneered the Baptist cause and work in this country, told of their vehement objection to the convention system. It was said that Eld. A. M. Slaydon rode his beautiful iron-gray mare many miles to "warn the churches of the danger of Conventionism."

There was an attempt to organize a State Convention" in Mississippi in 1824. It was short lived. Another effort to organize such a Convention in 1836 was successful after several years struggle against stubborn opposition. This was the dividing wedge which has separated Baptists in Mississippi ever since. It had now been driven into the once solid bulkhead of the Hobolochitto Association. We believe those on both sides of the question were good and honest men who believed their position was justified. Those who wanted to see the churches cooperate with the convention board felt that it would give them the advantage of a strong organization causing their efforts to be more effective in the cause of Christ. There can be no denying the fact that the State Convention as well as the parent body, the Southern Baptist Convention, had been a strong and effective organization.

On the other hand, those opposing cooperating with the convention board were very strong in their convictions that the Convention was unscriptural in its methods and compromising in its very nature, causing it to embrace modernism and liberalism. Time has proved much of their fears to be justified.

Jesus gave the "Great Commission" to the local church - Matthew 28:18-20. Some were fearful that the "board," by its very nature, would finally usurp this authority and "Lord it over His churches." This, perhaps, may have been their most disturbing suspicion. Some had doubts about the State Convention, feeling that it was too much influenced by the Southern Baptist Convention which had been organized as a "body politic" in Augusta, Georgia, in 1845, "with authority to receive, hold, possess, retain and dispose of property,

either real or personal, to sue and to be sued, and to make all by-laws, rules and regulations necessary to the transaction of their business, not inconsistent with the laws of this State or of the United States: said corporation being created for the purpose of eliciting, combining and directing the energies of the BAPTIST DENOMINATION OF CHRISTIANS, for the propagation of the gospel, any law, usage or custom to the contrary notwithstanding."

Candidly and respectfully we must admit, this wording of the SBC Charter could be construed as rather presumptuous.

The following report on the Objects and Powers of the Baptist State Convention was read by Rev. M. A. Sheppard, spoken to by Rev. J. G. Sibley and adopted:

"The objects and intentions of the Convention are to unify the Baptists of the State and increase their efforts in spreading the Gospel and enlightening the people. In order to spread the Gospel the Convention or State Board sends out missionaries to labor with and preach to the people in destitute places in our State. In order to support these godly men, the Convention Board receives voluntary contributions from individuals, Churches and Associations. The Convention also assists weak Churches in paying their pastors and weak Associations in paying their missionaries. In such cases she usually works in conjunction with the Church or Association seeking her aid, the Churches usually electing or recommending pastor and the Association, the missionary, and the Board helps to pay their salary. Powers. - The Convention neither has nor claims to have any power over the Churches or Associations composing its own body. It is strictly an advisory council. Such an idea as taxing the people is never raised in the Convention. The Convention formulates and lays plans for carrying on the great work, and the Churches or Associations may either receive or reject them as they see proper. Up to the year 1896, or in twenty-two years, there were over 10,000 additions to our Baptist cause through this agency, or about one-ninth of the entire membership in our State. A great many Churches and Associations have received help, and destitute places have been filled. During the year 1895 the Board had fifty men under appointment, 544 baptisms were reported and 94 Sunday schools organized. In view of such blessings attending the work, who, that professes the name of Christ, can oppose it? But ought we not rather join the great possession and march on to take this country for Christ? There is a great deal of work yet to be done in our State. There are places where the people know nothing of God's Word, then ought we not seek the most rational means of having these destitutions filled and push the work with all the energy that God has given us?" - Minutes of HBA, 1896.

It was by now quite clear that those on opposing sides of the "Con-

vention" issue were driving the dividing wedge which would ultimately separate them deeper and deeper. The die was cast. Division was inevitable.

CHAPTER XII

THE HOBOLOCHITTO IS DIVIDED

As early as 1874 Eld. J. B. Hamberlin had been sent by the State Convention Board to represent them at the annual session of the Hobolochitto Association at Gainesville. From that time onward he or others would attend the annual session to represent the interest of the State Convention Board. These were able men who were well prepared for their mission. In the early 1880's the influence of the State Convention was being noticeably felt. By the mid 1890's the number of ministers and laymen sympathetic with the work of the State Convention was about equal to those who opposed, and whose sympathies were with the General Association of Baptists in Mississippi.

The 1897 session of the Hobolochitto convened with Anner Baptist Church November 26-28. Eld. C. N. Woodcock preached the opening sermon from 1st Samuel 15:22, "Behold, to obey is better than to sacrifice, and to harken, than the fat of rams." There were twenty-two churches representing including Harmony by petitionary letter.

Officers elected were Eld. J. B. Flanagan, moderator; Eld. W. I. Williams, secretary; and J. M. Bilbo, treasurer. J. M. Bilbo was a brother to the inimitable Theodore Gilmore Bilbo, two times Governor and three times United States Senator.

Correspondence was approved to represent the Assocaition at the Red Creek, West Pearl River, Pearl River, Lebanon, General Associations and the State Convention.

Others who preached at this session included W. I. Williams and J. G. Sibley.

The Report on Orphanage was read by A. J. Smith and adopted.

It stated in part: "There is at Jackson, this State, an Orphanage, or Orphan Asylum, for homeless children. This institution was founded by, and is under the supervision of Rev. L. S. Foster, a well accredited Baptist minister. It is open to all homeless, white children - orphans. There are 12 children there now. They now occupy rented quarters, and are maintained by the voluntary contributions of the public. There is now a building fund being raised for the purpose of erecting necessary, and suitable, buildings for these and all other children that may be sent in. This is a most commendable and much needed institutions and should receive a most candid support."

This is now the Baptist Children's Village situated on a 147-acre

campus on Flag Chapel Drive in northwest Jackson.

At this session the Baptist Record was adopted as the Associational paper.

But in spite of a show of a spirit of benevolence and general harmony, all was not well, as reflected in the report on "State of the Churches." The report pointed out that "We are aware that the division now pending among many of our churches and people is impeding the progress of our Zion more than all other agencies combined."

The Little River Church made request and was granted "a letter of dismission." The Poplarville Church had taken the same action at the 1894 session. This was evidently due to the constant bickering which now at times was almost raucous.

The late Elder L. G. Varnado who was present at the 1897 session at Anner Church recalled one session lasting almost through the night a constant, and at times, heated arguement. The issue of cooperation with the State Convention was being forced to a vote. The contention was made that the matter of cooperation with any convention, association or other body, was a matter which each local church must settle. Those desiring to cooperate with the Convention Board wanted to deny the churches this right and privilege. This issue was never satisfactorily resolved. It became a bone of contention at every session of the Association for the next four years.

The 1898 session was held October 5, 6 and 7, with Spring Hill Church, eight miles north of Poplarville. The minutes noted that the previous officers were not present. Many of the churches sent delegates and no letter; others sent letters and no delegates. Several did not represent at all.

Report on "State of the Churches," read by J. M. Sammons, noted as did the report the previous year, with added alarm, the growing dissatisfaction among the churches. "We notice first," it said, "that there are numbers of churches not represented. This may be partly accounted for from the fact of yellow fever excitement. But very little progress, though some have reported a few accessions. But, brethren, from our personal knowledge of the state of things among our churches we are led to the belief that the cause of our Lord is suffering very greatly from a spirit of dissension and discord, and consequently non-co-operation. We recommend, therefore that every brother do everything in his power to bring about a more friendly co-operation among the churches; by visiting them and helping them to a more perfect understanding of our work."

On the same page (14) of the minutes of 1898 is found the "Report on Convention Work."

"We, your committee on Convention Work beg leave to report that we see no good reason for opposing or fighting the convention. We

think that the convention work is much misunderstood and misrepresented in our section of country and we would caution the churches and brethren against believing every flying report that they hear.

"We think that the convention is made up in the main of good, sound Baptists, sound in the faith, and ready at all times to sacrifice for the cause of Christ.

"We think that the convention is doing a great and a grand work in supplying the destitute with the gospel, in helping weak churches to maintain a pure gospel, and in co-operating with, and helping associations in the Mission and Christian work in general.

"We therefore recommend that we continue friendly relations and mutual friendship with the Baptist State Convention."

M. A. Sheppard, Chairman

It seemed rather clear that the battle lines were drawn; the division more pronounced between those determined to "take the Association into the Convention," and those who were equally as determined to oppose, and cooperate with the work of the General Association. Obviously, the opposing sides were on a collision course. There were those who earnestly sought a course of peace and harmony, but none cared to compromise their position.

The 1899 session of the Hobolochitto Association was held "with Corinth church, six miles south of Nicholson."

Brother J. J. Thornhill was elected moderator; Rev. W. I. Williams, clerk. Rev. M. A. Sheppard preached the introductory sermon.

Ordained ministers listed in the 1899 minutes were: James G. Sibley, N. Breland, J. M. Sammons, M. A. Sheppard, J. E. Bilbo, Hardy Smith, Thomas Dossett, C. N. Woodcock, W. I. Williams and N. F. Clark.

"Licensed" ministers listed: Theo. G. Bilbo, L. G. Varnado and G. W. Spiers.

There were fourteen churches represented. This was down from twenty-two a few years before.

The Olive Baptist Church came on petitionary letter. D. S. Byrd and J. E. Byrd were seated as "delegates," as they were called in the 1899 minutes.

"Fraternal Messengers were called for. Rev. A. V. Rowe was received from the State Convention, Rev. W. B. Holcomb from the Lebanon Association, Bro. N. E. Adams from the West Pearl River Association, a letter and package of minutes from the Red Creek Association."

At the morning session on the second day, correspondence with other bodies was arranged as follows: Red Creek Association - C. N. Woodcock, N. Breland, J. G. Sibley, H. P. Smith and M. A. Sheppard; West Pearl River Association - M. A. Sheppard, J. H. Stuart, T. R.

Sones and Boyd Smith; Baptist State Convention - J. G. Sibley, W. I. Williams, M. A. Sheppard, J. M. Sammons, B. F. Wheat, H. P. Smith, Boyd Smith, T. R. McQueen, J. E. Byrd and Z. T. Jones; Southern Baptist Convention - J. G. Sibley, delegate; N. Breland, alternate.

In the afternoon session: Lebanon Association - Hardy Smith, N. Breland, J. G. Sibley, J. M. Sammons, B. F. Wheat; General Association - T. R. Sones and J. E. Sheppard, William Chadwick, G. W. Spiers, Hardy Smith, J. J. Thornhill, Dunton Byrd, James A. Davis, J. A. Smith and Henry Reyer.

Dr. A. V. Rowe came as a very able representative of the State Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention. He preached at the "residence of Mr. Frierson." He had previously read the "Report on Missions."

From the early 1840's to the turn of the century, the term "Elder" was most always used when addressing a minister of the gospel. The term was used more in reference to his office than as a title. The term "Reverend," as a ministerial title, used probably as an adjective, was gradually becoming the custom in the 1890's. This, it was believed, was due to Catholic and Protestant influences from certain areas. The "Convention" Baptists were soon to adopt the use of "Reverend" when addressing their ministers. The "Landmark" Baptists continued the use of "Elder" when addressing ministers of the gospel.

Reverend is found in the Bible one time - Ps. 111:9. It is with reference to the name of God: "He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name."

Catholics were first to make use of it as a ministerial title; Protestants followed suit; and in time, some rather weak Baptists who wanted to "be like others," picked it up.

Reports on the following were read and adopted at the 1899 session at Corinth church;

Publications, Missions, Sunday School, Nominations, Sacred Music, Orphanage, State of the Churches, Temperance, Sustentations, Ministerial Education and Obituaries.

"Abstracts from the Tables"

"Bethel reports 83 members, but does not report pastor's salary. She reports 9 baptisms, 4 from Sunday School

"Juniper Grove reports a membership of 108; pastor's salary \$68.90, and \$26 dollars for State Missions.

"Clear Creek reports a membership of 27, as compared with 17 last year; pastor's salary, \$25; 8 baptisms from the Sunday School.

"Anner is still alive. She reports 41 members; pastor's salary \$40;

her Sunday school is still moving on.

"Spring Hill reports a great revival.

"Ford's Creek reports a membership of 50, and a subscription of \$110 for a new house.

"For all around work Napoleon is easily the banner church in the Association. She reports \$51.40 for Sunday school work and 5 baptisms from Sunday school, together with a lot of other good things.

"Sones Chapel reports 109 members; pastors salary \$27.65.

"White Sand reports 8 baptisms; a membership of 58, and \$40 for pastor's salary.

"Union reports 3 ordained ministers; one licentiate; 243 members, \$31.10 as pastor's salary. She does not report a Sunday School.

"Pine Grove reports \$10 for Ministerial Education; \$44.55 for their pastor, and a membership of 53.

"Harmony reports J. T. Smith and R. B. Miller as delegates; Rev. Hardy Smith as pastor and asks the prayers of the Association.

"Mission Ridge reports one death; 23 more nearly dead. She desires to overcome the wicked one.

"Olive reports one licentiate; a membership of 18.

"Henley Field reports two baptisms; \$2 for printing minutes.

"Corinth reports 20 baptisms; a membership of 110, and \$35 for their pastor."

M. A. Sheppard

White Sand was host to the annual session in 1900. Eld. Newton Breland was elected moderator. Eld. W. I. Williams was elected clerk for the fifth and last time he was to serve. Eld. N. F. Clark preached the opening sermon.

In 1901 the Association was convened in annual session with Bethel church. Brother J. J. Thornhill was elected moderator; and Brother Theo. G. Bilbo, clerk. Eld. James G. Sibley brought the introductory message for the meeting.

The meeting at Bethel was fraught with frustration. Many, it was said, were made bitter. Some of the churches had refused to represent at the annual sessions for the past seven or eight years because of the constant bickering and dissension in the meetings. This was the last time for the churches of the Hobolochitto to assemble as one body. The meeting was finally adjourned on a note of sadness. A bit of pathos possessed the hearts of friends and brethren who had "labored together with God" in mankind's most vital and noble cause for so long.

Such old trail-blazers as W. H. Varnado, Andrew M. Slaydon, Thad Mitchell, Reuben R. Breland, Joseph C. Seal and others who had opposed the convention work, the system and its principles, had passed from the scene, and their voices no longer heard in opposition to a

movement they believed to be in violation of New Testament principles. These men had branded the convention movement as " a departure from the time-honored, historic Biblical principles of the Baptists." They felt that the churches had been misled.

Those churches which had decided to cast their lot with the convention work met the next year 1902 - with Olive church, and continued with the name of Hobolochitto Association until about 1920 when it was changed to Pearl River County Baptist Association. This group of churches have continued to increase in number of churches and in membership. Their ministry is a viable influence in the work of the Mississippi Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention.

The churches claiming to hold to the principles of the early churches of the old Hobolochitto Association met with Sones Chapel to re-organize. Being weary of division and dissension, they first chose the name of "Philadelphia," or "Brotherly love," which they felt best expressed the great need for the time and circumstances. Later in the meeting it was decided by the messengers to adopt the name: "Peace and Union."

CONVENTION WORK NEW TO THE CHURCHES

The work of the State Baptist Convention as well as the Southern Baptist Convention was practically unknown to the membership of most of the churches in the Hobolochitto Association until about 1900 and the time of the division of the Association. All the churches in this area prior to this time were what we now know as old-line Missionary Landmark or Association Baptist churches.

In an interview by Beth Baldwin, community editor for the Picayune Item, issue of May 22, 1979, with Mrs. Barney Lumpkin who is near 80 years old, and a life-long member of Sones Chapel Church, Mrs. Lumpkin said: "A lot has changed since we got married in a horse and buggy, . . . About the biggest change I've noticed, is when I was a kid, the only churches around were Landmark Missionary Baptist churches. All the churches have changed."

Eld. Thomas Dossett was elected moderator of the Association at the 1902 meeting at Sones Chapel. Eld. James Q. Sones was elected clerk; and Bro. T. J. Mitchell, treasurer.

Those who preached during the meeting were: Elders R. L. King, Dawson Breland, James Q. Sones and Addison Bounds.

Eld. Hardy Smith led the singing to open the services of the first day's session. Other minister present included J. B. Flanagan, Newton Breland, Addison Mitchell and Pembrook Mitchell.

The churches were few in number, but the fellowship was once again warm and inspiring. There was brotherly love, unity and peace.

It was felt that progress would be gained in time. These churches were once again "Laborers together with God."

The old Association was known as The Peace and Union Association through 1919 when there was a temporary merger with the State Line Association through the year 1943. In 1944 the churches of the original territory of the old Hobolochitto once again became known as The Hobolochitto Baptist Association.



A man's religious convictions touches all his life, or it touches none of it!



Theodore G. Bilbo (1877-1947)

THEODORE GILMORE BILBO, illustrious son of Pearl River County, statesman, Christian, patriot; twice Govenor of Mississippi; and three times elected United States Senator; when only 24 years old, a public school teacher and active church worker, was elected clerk of the Hobolochitto Baptist Association in 1901.

Theo. G. Bilbo was born October 13, 1877, the youngest of nine children of James Oliver and Beedie Wallace Bilbo. James O. Bilbo was a confederate veteran and a staunch Baptist.

Esteemed by his friends and despised by his enemies, news analyst around the world called him "The Man," Bilbo. His political career spanned forty-four years. Sometimes referred to as the "stormy petrel," his political adventures were begun in a race for Circuit Clerk of Pearl River County in 1903. His campaign met with defeat at

the hands of a one-armed Baptist preacher by the name of W. W. "Bill" Mitchell who won over Bilbo by 56 votes. Theo G. Bilbo was never called a quitter. Determined and courageous, he campaigned for the office of state senator in 1907, and won handily. He was elected lieutenant governor in 1912.

Although he was never ordained, Bilbo was licensed to preach the Gospel on May 24, 1898. He believed, as Baptists historically have believed, that all the Scriptures were inspired of God; therefore inerrant and eternal. He was a lover of the Word of God.

He once stated in the presence of the author that it was his conviction that only those called of God should be ordained to the work of the gospel ministry. He did not feel that God had called him to preach.

It was once told in a circle of political conversationists of Bilbo starting out as a young preacher, but for some unknown reason did not pursue the high calling. Jokingly, one opined "the trouncing that one-arm preacher Bill Mitchell gave him in that race for Circuit Clerk was one too many preachers for Bilbo."

Early in his political career he was admitted to the bar and became a practicing attorney in Mississippi. He was Mississippi's master political strategist and campaigner. He knew what to say, when, how and where. He was the hub of political controversy throughout his stormy career. He enjoyed every minute of it. While he was tough, rugged and aggressive on the outside, there lay within his breast a heart of love and tender care for the good of all men.

After two terms as governor and a third time in the United States Senate, stricken with cancer, he died in Turo Infirmary in New Orleans August 21, 1947. His body carried to his beautiful and beloved "Dream House" at Juniper Grove south of Poplarville, memorial services were conducted by Pastor John H. Nix from the historic Juniper Grove Baptist Church, which Bilbo always referred to as "the Little Brown Church in the Wildwood." He was buried in the church cemetery just back of the church.

Despite all that has been written and spoken by his left-wing liberal political enemies, Theodore G. Bilbo was a church-going, Bible-believing, God-fearing man. He loved people . . . especially the common people. He loved the black as well as the white.

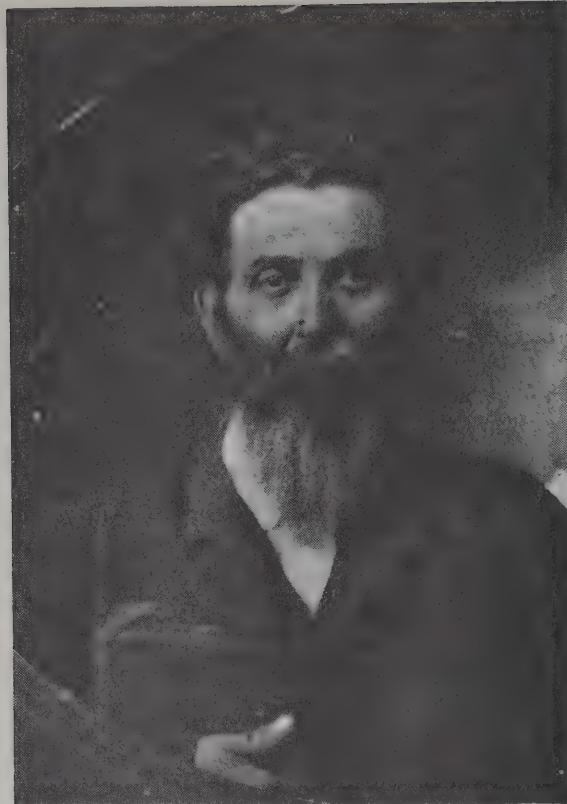
Senator Bilbo was a friend to the author. He demonstrated his friendship on numerous occasions and tangible ways. One of which was a generous contribution toward completion of the Mt. Calvary Baptist Church building in Picayune at the time he was having a financial struggle to complete the Juniper Grove Church building and that of his "Dream House" project. He was giving "every dollar I can earn, borrow or beg" toward completion of that life-time dream. Wes Hart, a one-arm black man and friend of Bilbo, was doing the work on the lake around the summer cottage with a mule and slip.

The author talked with Senator Bilbo personally and frankly on numerous occasions. I visited and prayed with him in the hospital not long before he died. He was a saved man. He had a great testimony of his personal experience of grace.

He told of being marked for destruction by the International Communist Conspiracy, its dupes and sympathizers, who planned to destroy the United States before it could finally subjugate the masses of humankind. The atheistic communists, he said, well knew that a Bible-believing, Bible-taught people could never be enslaved. The South being America's Bible belt, it must of necessity be brought down. More Bible-believing missionaries are sent and supported by Christians in America, especially the South, than all the rest of the world combined. The communists have conspired to create and agitate strife and unrest in the South and then in all America between the white and Negro races. Bilbo honestly believed that any man who had the courage to stand up and expose such a conspiracy was a marked man. It's as simple as that, he said.

The honorable S. G. Thigpen, Sr., eminent business man and historian of Pearl River County, said of Bilbo: "From my knowledge of Mississippi politics since about 1900, I consider Bilbo one of the most constructive, one of the most able and one of the best informed of all men who have served this state as governor. Without question he was the most convincing speaker and the greatest student of all those I have known in Mississippi politics since I can remember going back to about 1900."

In the inimitable Bilbo style, he once said: "When it comes to being a Baptist, I'm as strong as horseradish."



Eld. John I. Hill

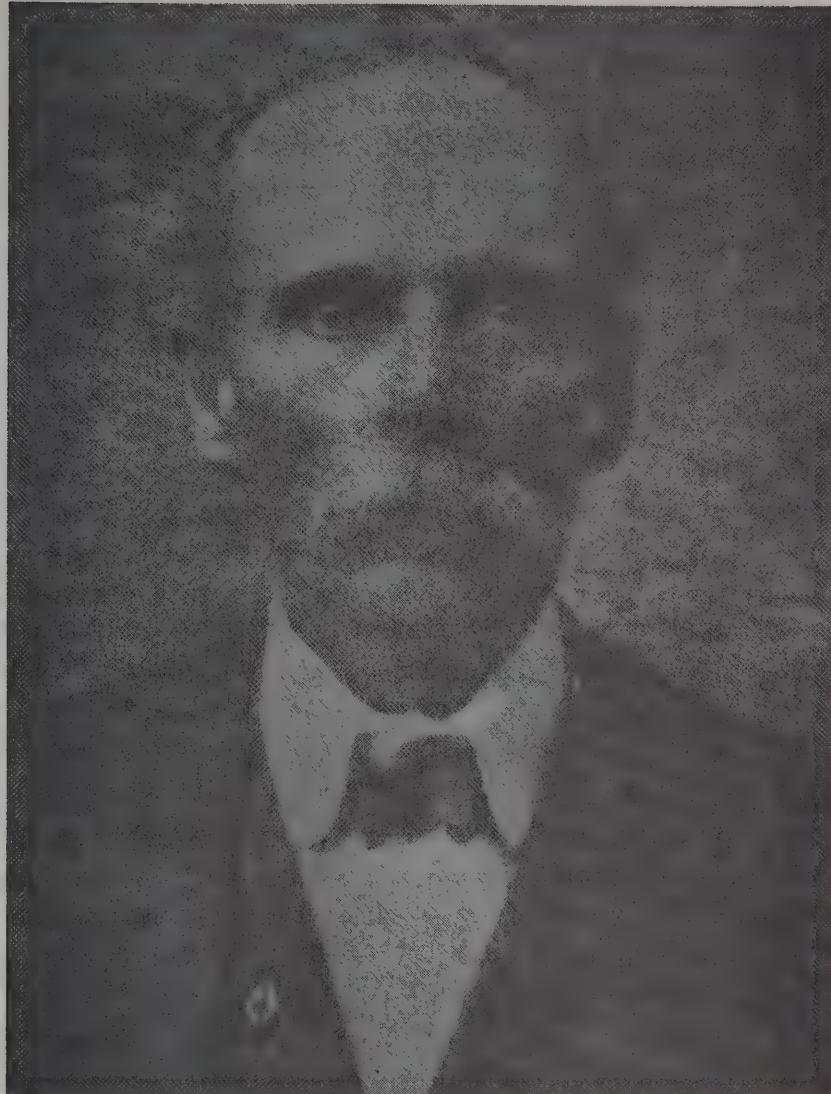
ELDER JOHN ISAIAH HILL who led in the organization of Sones Chapel Baptist Church in 1882 was a charter member, and served the church as pastor from 1882 to 1889. He and his faithful wife were the first to be buried in the Sones Chapel Cemetery. His daughter, Elizabeth, was the wife of Gideon Lumpkin, a deacon of Sones Chapel for many years. Many of Brother Hill's descendants are still members of Sones Chapel, as well as other churches in south Mississippi and southeast Louisiana.

"For a child of God who walks close beside the Master, the morning is filled with fragrance, the noonday with satisfaction, and the evening with peace."

—Margaret Moore Jacobs

The man who walks with God is always sure of good company, and of what direction he is going.

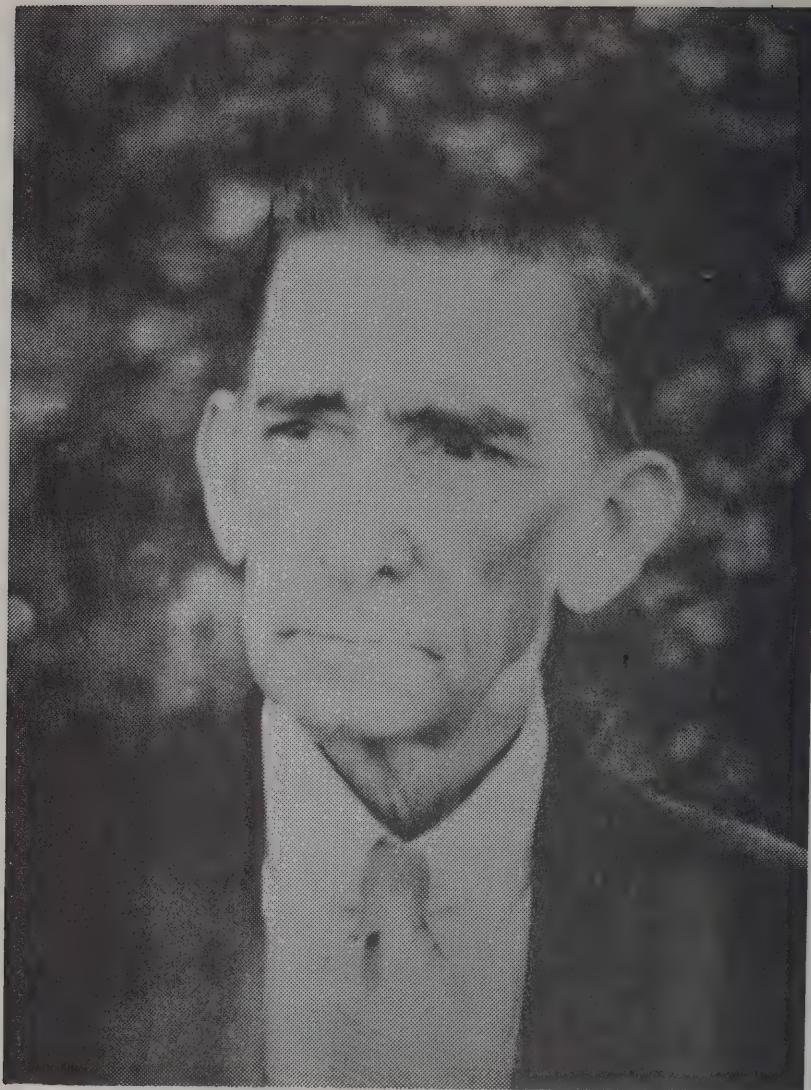
"A man's real limitations are not the things he wants to do, but cannot; they are the things he ought to do, but does not."



Eld. Thomas Dossett (1847-1928)

ELDER THOMAS DOSSETT, an able preacher, faithful pastor, and wise leader among God's people, was moderator of the Association ten times from 1902-1908 and 1911-1913. He was elected the first moderator after the Hobolochitto Association divided over the "convention" issue, in 1902 at the meeting at Sones Chapel. Born February 22, 1847. He passed on to be with the Lord only a few days before his 81st birthday. He was buried in the Pearson Cemetery in the Caesar community.

Only in Christ can the highest aspirations and fullest potential of the human soul be realized.



Eld. L. G. Varnado (1874-1967)

ELDER L. G. VARNADO, grandson of the legendary William Henry Varnado, was licensed to preach in 1893. After a brief illness he passed from this life to be with the Lord he served so long on the evening of August 13, 1967. He lived for the greater part of 93 years. He was actively engaged in the work of the ministry for 74 years. No other man in this area, and perhaps few from anywhere in our times has lived to be actively engaged in the ministry for so many years. During these years he was pastor of churches in Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. Recognized as an outstanding expositor of the Scriptures, he was an interstate missionary for a number of years for the churches of the American Baptist Association (BMA of America). He was a member of the College Heights Baptist Church in Poplarville at the time of his death. His funeral services were conducted by Dr. Ralph A. Brand, pastor.



Eld. James Q. Sones (1876-1954)

ELDER JAMES QUITMAN SONES, was born in a log house on the beautiful Hobolochitto Creek in what was later called Sones Chapel Community on October 27, 1876, the fourth child and third son of Benjamin J. and Caroline Lee Sones. Benjamin J. Sones was a Confederate Army veteran.

J. Q., known by so many as "Jim Sones" was baptized by the beloved Eld. A. M. Slaydon in Hobolochitto Creek October 20, 1895, into the fellowship of Sones Chapel Baptist Church. He was married to Alma Ball January 30, 1898, by Eld. C. P. Toney, Sr. He was licensed to preach by Sones Chapel church August 15, 1900; and ordained June 20, 1903. The ordaining presbytery was composed of Elders J. I. Hill, Newton Breland and Thomas Dossett. He accepted the call to pastor Sones Chapel Church in August of 1904. He pastored the church for 46 consecutive years before failing health caused him to tender his resignation.

He loved the Word of God; he loved to preach; he loved the churches. He was a respected and influential leader among the churches in south Mississippi and southeast Louisiana for fifty years.

He was elected clerk of the Association in 1902, and served in that capacity for some eight or nine years. He had served as clerk of his home church from 1901-1903. He served as moderator longer than any other man - 24 times from 1914 to 1947. He was indeed a true and dedicated leader of the old Association. He was a humble servant of God endowed with great courage of conviction. He was a bold, well informed, and a dynamic gospel preacher who stood firmly for the time-honored tenets of the historic Baptist faith. All did not always agree with him, but all responsible people respected him.

He reviewed the history of the early churches, and the old Hobolochitto Baptist Association to the author many times.

The Lord called him home to await the glory of the resurrection in 1954. Memorial services were conducted from Sones Chapel Church, and he was buried in the church cemetery.

“Satan has many tools, but discouragement is the handle that fits them all.”

“Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord” - Psalms 27:14.

“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” - Galatians 6:9-10.

NEW PALESTINE ORGANIZED IN 1898

“Uncle William ‘Juckers’ Smith, Uncle Billy Stockstill, Uncle Josh Stockstill and Uncle George Stockstill . . . met in the year 1898 to organize a church. These four men and their families had been members of Old Palestine Church. In the process of building a new church, a location could not be agreed upon. They, then withdrew their membership and organized New Palestine Church. Oddly enough they named it after the Mother church. The mode of traveling at the turn of the century greatly influenced these christian men as to the location of this church.

“Uncle William ‘Juckers’ Smith gave the four acres of land for a

building site and cemetery. Mr. Jesse Herrin surveyed the land with the help of Carson Smith. Uncle Billy furnished the lumber and Eugene Smith and Tom Stockstill hauled the material from Nicholson with an ox team furnished by Mr. Van Stockstill. The nails were four-sided and the sills were hewn perfectly by hand. The frame work was of rough lumber and the entrance was at the corner. It also had a steeple. You will note (from old photo) that the entrance had a railing. That was to keep the goats from getting on the vestibule. There was no stock law at that time.

"The boys of these four men with the guidance of their fathers and the help of Mr. Luther Walker (the author's father) built the church. Services were held in a small house near by until the building was completed. Services were held once a month on Saturday and Sunday. The pastor's salary was set at \$50.00 per year. Dan Stockstill was the first clerk and Josh and Billy Stockstill were the first deacons. The floor was kept spotlessly clean by Margaret, Edwina and Katie Smith (daughters of uncle Bill 'Juckers'). Bought brooms were a premium, so they used brooms made from broomsage." - From "Through the Years," a historical sketch of New Palestine Church.

New Palestine did not represent at the annual session of the Hobolochitto Association for the first two or three years after its organization. The reason for not doing so is not known for sure. Some believe that it was because of the dissensions at the meeting due to the "convention" question.

The church did elect W. I. Williams and William Smith as messengers to the annual session at White Sand in 1900. This was one year prior to the division of the Hobolochitto Association in 1901-1902. The church has cooperated with the convention work ever since.

Many of Pearl River County's finest families have worshipped and been a part of this great old church. Many found Christ precious to their souls through her ministry.

The first Sunday School the author ever recalls attending was at New Palestine. The first time he ever remembers hearing the Gospel preached was by Dr. John P. Culpepper at New Palestine before he was four years old. When I look back upon those experiences now, my heart bubbles over with gratitude.

Pastors include Newton Breland, William Isaac Williams, O. N. Harrington, B. S. Penton, John P. Culpepper, G. W. Holcomb, L. A. Moon, J. T. Dale, S. P. Powell, Phil J. Walker, E. W. Moore, Clyde Gordon, J. E. Moak, Hoyte Nelson, James Clark, R. H. Perry, Oscar Whitescarver, David Poe and Harry Barnes.

Church Clerks include D. W. Stockstill, Luther Walker, J. H. Furr, L. Stockstill, A. A. Stockstill, F. W. Whitfield, Willie Furr, R. O. Johnston, Otto Smith, J. P. Buckley, C. R. Stockstill, and Ercelle Mitchell.

PICAYUNE FIRST BAPTIST ORGANIZED IN 1904

The First Baptist Church was organized March 27, 1904, with a charter membership of 13 persons. The services were held in the Masonic Hall and the Reverend W. I. Williams was the first pastor on a quarter time basis. The work was first started as a mission of the New Palestine Church.

The original building of the church was built and dedicated in December, 1906 in the 300 block of Second Street. The beautiful white frame building that was built in 1925 was to relocate the church in a more central location with more property for future expansion. In 1966 the present sanctuary was finished which seats 1500 at a cost of over \$1.200.000 including furnishings. -- From 1975 Minutes of Pearl River Baptist Association.

While the First Baptist Church was not the first Baptist church organized in Picayune, that distinction belongs to the old Antioch Baptist Church which was organized in 1882, and ceased to exist after 1934; but First Baptist is the largest church in Pearl River County, and certainly is one of the great Baptist Churches in Mississippi and the entire South. The church has always cooperated in the home and world missions work of the Pearl River Baptist Association and the Southern Baptist Convention.

The June 30, 1976, issue of the Pearl River Journal listed the following as charter members: Jesse Herrin, Mrs. Jesse Herrin, Joan Herrin, Myrtle Herrin, Charley Lindsey, Mrs. Charley Lindsey, E. J. "Van" Stockstill, C. A. Thornhill, Mrs. C. A. Thornhill, Marian Tucker, W. I. Williams and Mrs. W. I. Williams.

Pastors who have led the great old church through the years include: William Isaac Williams, W. S. Allen, G. H. Webb, J. B. Rimes, Oscar N. Harrington, W. B. Holcomb, C. E. Bass, F. H. Bancroft, R. R. Jones, N. A. Edmonds, J. B. Quinn, Roland Q. Leavell, B. Locke Davis, H. T. McLaurin, R. K. Corder, O. P. Estes a second time, John R. Maddox, Carless Evans, Bill Duncan and William T. Pruitt.

The church has always been blessed with good pastors. Some of these men, among them, Dr. Roland Q. Leavell, Dr. O. P. Estes, Rev. R. K. Corder and Dr. John R. Maddox, were great preachers of the Word, great pastors, and great leaders.

It was in an evening worship hour in this old church the author found Christ as his Saviour and Lord. He was baptized into its fellowship afterward. He was a member, perhaps not a very good one, when he first felt the call to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

OTHER SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION CHURCHES

The 1975 Minutes of the Pearl River Baptist Association listed the following churches cooperating in the convention work which were organized since 1900: Carriere First Baptist Church, 1904; West Union Baptist, 1905; Steep Hollow, 1908; Derby, 1914; Oak Hill, 1911; Goodyear, 1921; Roseland Park, 1935; Nicholson First, 1936; New Henleyfield, 1945; Ozona, 1945; West Poplarville, 1947; Grace Memorial, 1963; Flat Top Unity, 1967; Central, McNeill, 1972; Emmanuel, 1965.

CHAPTER XIII

ARDUOUS YEARS - 1902-1919

The words of Paul the Apostle may well have expressed the feelings of some at this time: "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed: . . ." - II Corinthians 4:8-9.

The Association met for their 47th annual session; the second meeting as The Peace and Union Association; with Old Palestine in 1903.

Back to the old Mother Church . . . for a "New Beginning," where the Association was first organized fifty-three years before.

Their numbers were less, but there was sweet peace, unity and good fellowship among the messengers, visiting pastors and laymen present for the first time in a decade or more. There was a feeling among them that once again they were truly what they set out to be: "Laborers Together With God."

The years from 1902 until the end of Word War I were arduous years for the churches. It was proposed that these must of necessity be rebuilding years. They were in some measure; but they were also trying and frustrating years. The number of churches representing at the annual associational meetings through these years ranged from a low of five to a high of twelve. The mode of travel among other things discouraged, and often prevented attendance at the meetings.

The Minutes of the Association from 1902 to 1919 show the following churches cooperating in the work and representing at the annual meetings by letters and messengers: Sones Chapel, Old Palestine, Antioch in Picayune; Antioch in Harrison County; Macedonia, Zion Hill, Pleasant Hill, Myrtle Grove, Buelah, Rocky Creek, Pilgrim Rest, Bethel in Jackson County; Mount Moriah, Red Creek Increase, Long Branch, Mill Creek, Unity and Millard Batson. Eighteen churches in all.

Ministers listed in the Minutes for the same period were: Thomas Dossett, James Q. Sones, W. A. Bell, John A. Price, James A. Carroll,

Joseph A. Creel, J. R. Whigton, J. R. Gordon, Pembrook Mitchell, J. B. Flanagan, Hardy Smith, R. L. King, Newton Breland, Ad Mitchell, Andrew Jackson "Jack" Spiers, Ad Bounds, A. G. Fortenberry, J. R. Burge, E. R. Boone, E. L. Lee, Elonza Boone, M. H. Broadus, J. J. King, J. N. Cowart, Peter P. Smith, Walter A. Burks, Billy Jones, W. G. Anderson, J. M. Pitts and C. N. Woodcock. All the churches being one fourth time (once per month preaching services), these pastors also preached to churhces in other adjoining associations - Red Creek, State Line, West Pearl River and Landmark.

Despite the seeming uncompromising stance taken by some, a number of the churches altered their allegiance, moving back and forth from one associational group to the other. They had difficulty making up their collective minds. It was often determined by what Association had the sympathy of the pastor.

Old Palestine went into the "convention" work from about 1916 through 1918. The old church petitioned the "Peace and Union" again for fellowship at the meeting at Mill Creek Church in 1919.

George Ford Church was in the "convention" work for a number of years through 1918 before seeking fellowship with "Landmark" chur-ches.

Henleyfield First Baptist Church was identified with the Pearl River County Association and the Convention work for a number of years before voting to return to the Landmark group. This resulted in a dis-satisfied group, under the leadership of Rev. N. F. Clark, pulling away from the church and continuing services on alternating Sundays in the same building. This was an unpleasant experience for families divided against each other in one of Pearl River County's finest communities for some sixteen years. The rebel group finally discontinued services when their pastor, E. W. Moore, resigned. This action came on the heels of a joint community prayer effort mutually participated in by families on both sides. Most of the families of the split-off group returned to the old church, and were received into her fellowship again. The author was pastor at Henleyfield at the time.

A year or so later a new church was organized in the old Henleyfield school house under the leadership of Dr. Otto P. Estes, pastor of the Picayune First Baptist Church in 1945. This is the present New Henleyfield Southern Baptist Church located on Highway 43.

Sycamore Baptist Church was "organized under the leadership of Eld. Billy Jones. The church being orginally constituted in 1912 by an 'arm' extended by Antioch church in Picayune, was started as an old-line (Landmark) Baptist Church. It later cooperated with the "Convention" for a number of years "till about 1941." — Copied from Sycamore Church history files in library of Mississippi Baptist Commission on History at Southeastern Baptist College in Laurel, Mississippi.

The Cedar Grove Baptist Church at Nicholson was organized November 7, 1907. The church cooperated with the work of the Pearl River County Baptist Association, identified with the Convention Board from its beginning 'till about 1941 when it petitioned the State Line (Landmark) Association for fellowship under the leadership of Eld. John W. Miller.

An article on the history of Cedar Grove Baptist Church and written by Wilma Mason and Dorothy Mitchell for the June 30, 1976, issue of The Pearl River Journal sys: "Rev. W. R. Allen served this church as pastor from 1944 until 1960. On November 11, 1945, Cedar Grove Baptist Church joined the Louisisana State Association, Interstate and Foreign Landmark Missionary Baptist Association of America."

The 1945 minute book of the Hobolochitto Baptist Association shows that Cedar Grove Baptist Church was represented by messengers and letter at the annual session held with Lee's Chapel Baptist Church #2. Messengers were Brethren Frank Marshall, Mrs. J. T. Thigpen and Mrs. Dorothy Mitchell.

Wolf Creek Baptist Church, now for a long number of years in the fellowship and work of the Hobolochitto Baptist Association, once cooperated with the Convention work, was organized in 1907.

In searching the Associational minutes and other available records we find the same is true with other churches of this area. The old Zion Hill Baptist Church among them.

FREE TO DO RIGHT . . . NOT WRONG

Baptist have historically held that New Testament Churches were autonomous. They are not to be dictated to by conventions, associations, committees, deacons nor pastors. They recognize no Headship but Christ; no Creed but the Bible; and no Administrator but the Holy Spirit. The churches of the Hobolochitto Association adhere tenaciously to these principles.

"This Association acknowledges and maintains that each Church is an independent body and possesses the sole right to exercise and control its own affairs; and therefore, this Association has no right or power to interfere with the internal rights and privileges of Churches composing her body, but may withdraw from any Church which may hold false doctrines, or tolerate immoral practices." - Article 1, Constitution and By-Laws.

Baptists have been extremely vocal in demanding their "freedom." They forget sometimes that "freedom" is liberty within Scriptural context to do what is right. It is never a license to do wrong.

It is doubtless true that Baptists have misused, and even abused, their liberty. While we have traditionally refused to be forced into any mold of human origin; we must be bound in all things by both the letter

and spirit of the Word of God. We never have a right to act in violation of "Thus saith the Lord." Most of our Baptist divisions and "family feuds" have been of our own doings, and to our own sorrow.

It is true we are admonished to "stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, . . ." - Galatians 5:1. "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" - Galatians 5:13. "But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak" - I Corinthians 8:9.

Baptists have freely exercised the right to criticize one another. We must suppose they sorta' reserve this right to themselves. They don't appreciate "outsiders" putting into their family affairs. This is especially true if its a case of "the pot calling the kettle, 'black'." Baptists are "a peculiar people." But we are not at liberty to be cantankerous. This reminds us of a statement made some years ago by Dr. Vance Havner: He said "Baptists are many, but not much!" Baptist crowds will respond with a hearty "Amen" when Brother Havner says it; he is one of their own.

Divisions are never a pleasant experience for Christian people. Baptists are not by themselves when it comes to divisions and fragmentation. The Catholics suffered from division several centuries ago. The same is true with all the Protestant Bodies - Lutherans, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, Methodists and others which have been in existence long enough. If the Baptists have experienced more, it is only because they have been here longer. And then, to, they are free from the lordship of all earthly ecclesiastical authority. They verily believe that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect (complete), throughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 3:16-17); and that Christ is "the head over all things to the church" (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18).

Most of our church and associational divisions are unfortunate experiences. One side or both are wrong; but too stubborn to admit it. The Lord will ultimately be the judge.

There have been times when the "Convention Association (or Landmark)" division became a very emotional issue. It left a certain residue of suspicion and distrust.

The most unfortunate effect of the division as far as the Association or Landmark churches are concerned was that they drew themselves into a defensive shell until more recent years. Under a cloud of defeatism, the leaders, and consequently the churches, found themselves in a straitjacket of negative thinking. They were "against" anything and everything, that to them, "smacked of conventionism." It must be said to the credit of the Convention churches, and to their

leaders, they cultivated a positive attitude and a progressive spirit. They organized effectively and proficiently; and it paid off.

It is not certain where the Association met in 1904 and 1905. Myrtle Grove was host to the meeting in 1906; Old Palestine in 1907; Antioch in Picayune, 1910; Red Creek Increase near McHenry, 1911; Bethel in Jackson County, 1912; Sones Chapel, 1913; Antioch in Picayune, 1914; place not known, 1915; Long Branch, 1916; Sones Chapel, 1917; Macedonia, 1918; Mill Creek, 1919. The 1919 session held with Mill Creek Church was the last meeting of the Association under the name of "Peace and Union."

Sones Chapel was the largest of the churches during these years with 190 members in 1913; but down to 163 members in 1917.

Mill Creek and Long Branch churches petitioned the Association for fellowship for the first time at the meeting with Red Creek Increase in 1911. The church at Millard sometimes called Millard Batson, petitioned for fellowship in 1918.

Eld. Marion Walters was received as a corresponding messenger from the Landmark Baptist Association at the meeting at Sones Chapel in 1917. Exceedingly well versed in the scriptures, he was almost without peer in Mississippi in his ability to expound the Word of God. With a keen intellect, he commanded an uncommon knowledge of the Bible. A legend in his own right, he was known by some, as "the walking Bible." He was at the time missionary for the churches of the old Landmark Baptist Association. The Landmark Association later changed its name to Big Creek Baptist Association. It was organized in 1896. The visit of Brother Walters was one of many such visits he made to the meetings through the years prior to his death. Loved and esteemed, he enjoyed the confidence of our Baptist people throughout Mississippi and other areas where he was known. With his passing from the scene here, Mississippi Baptists suffered the loss of one of their towering spiritual giants.

Dr. C. C. Winters of McNeill, Arkansas was a visitor to the Association in 1919 at Mill Creek church. Dr. Winters, humble and scholarly, was at the time serving as "Missionary Treasurer" of the General Association of Baptist Churches of America. He was one of America's acknowledged leaders among old-line Baptists.

Eld. Thomas Dossett served as Moderator of the Association from 1902 through 1908; and again from 1911 through 1913. Eld. James A. Carroll was Moderator in 1909 and 1910. Eld. James Quitman Sones served as Moderator from 1914 through 1919. Brother Sones was clerk from 1902 through 1905. Eld. Charles Calhoun was clerk from 1906 to 1909. Brother George N. Thigpen was clerk in 1910 and from 1912 through 1915. Eld. J. Q. Sones was clerk from 1916 to 1918. Eld. A. Jack Spiers was elected clerk in 1919.

Due to a number of discouraging factors: including the small number

of churches, their small memberships, a seeming lack of interest in general, and the absence of a sufficient number of strong pastors and associational leaders; it was decided, by vote of the church messengers, to merge and work with the State Line Association until such time that each Association was again sufficiently able to stand alone and do the work which needed to be done in their respective territories.

Like the "Peace and Union," the "State Line" Association was organized in 1902. The churches originally composing the State Line Association were in Washington Parish and across the Mississippi - Louisiana line in Marion and Walthall counties in Mississippi. The churches in south Mississippi and southeast Louisiana, as in other areas, were having a struggle to survive in the face of a strong and growing "Convention" organization and influence. Eld. G. C. Knight was moderator of the State Line Association. Eld. J. Q. Sones was moderator of the Peace and Union. These two men stood out among the churches as leaders with courage and vision. In every generation there have been a few who have demonstrated genuine pastoral care and concern for all the churches, and possessed the Christian fortitude, by the grace of God, to do what they could in the common interest of all the churches. Others have satisfied themselves to play in "their own little puddle" while the ship of Zion drifted where it may. There have always been a few Builders . . . and a few wreckers. There have also been some who never built, but patiently waited to enjoy and profit by what others built.

It was under the advice and leadership of these men that the churches of these two associational groups combined their strength, in what ultimately proved to be, a successful effort to survive the sweep of Convention influence which was capturing the churches. It was mutually agreed upon that the 1920 annual session would convene with Pine Grove Church near Varnado, Louisiana.

This marked the close of the "Peace and Union" era. A new chapter in the history of the churches and the old Association was about to begin. The movement had served well for the time. J. Q. Sones and G. C. Knight were, no doubt, God's men who had "come to the kingdom" for such a time as this.

Brother Sones reviewed these trying experiences on numerous occasions to the author. The "Peace and Union" era - 1902 through 1919, was perhaps the most trying years for these churches in their eventful history.



OAK GROVE CHURCH

Standing serenely and stately by the side of the road in the Silver Run community on Wolf River in northeast Pearl River County is the gleaming white house of worship of the Oak Grove Baptist Church. The old church was organized in 1871.

It is not known for certain how many buildings have housed the congregation in the past years. The congregation had let the last building fall into a hopeless state of repair, and had moved into the old Silver Run School building. Discouraged and few in number, there was talk of "disbanding." The author was called to preach for them once a month on Sunday while worshiping in the school. Within the year, 1945, the building shown above was completed and paid for. Eld. Joe Harris was invited to preach the dedication sermon. The author preached in the new building on Saturday morning and evening twice per month (2nd and 4th), with Sunday School every Sunday afternoon.

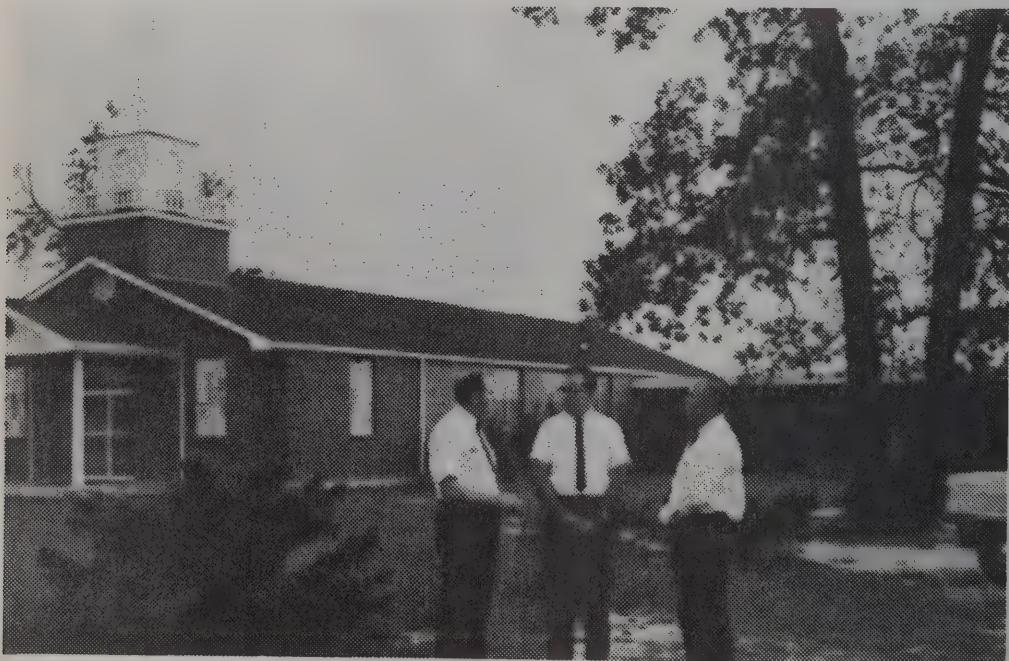
Standing in front of the church is the late Elder John W. Thomas (1875-1961) of Bogalusa, Louisiana, one of the most esteemed, kind and gentle souls this author ever knew. The author snapped the picture on Saturday morning just before morning worship. Brother Thomas brought the message for that service. This great old Christian soldier had a way of encouraging and inspiring people when he talked with them of which we have never known the equal.

The picture was made, it seems, just as the sun rose from the east to kiss the house of God as it awaited His people for worship.

The church has since added to the building. They now have full-time

services. Eld. Royce Perry is the pastor.

Oak Grove was cooperating in the fellowship of the Hobolochitto Association before it became a charter member of the old Red Creek Association. It is one of the faithful churches of the old Hobolochitto. Holding forth the Word of God, her light continues to shine brightly in a world of great darkness.



HENLEYFIELD CHURCH

First Baptist Church of Henleyfield was organized with eight charter members in 1874. The two-story white frame structure pictured (upper) above is the old "Henelyfield Church's" second house of worship erected about 1911. The first building erected about 1875 housed both the church and a school. The church shared the old two-story building with the Henley Field Masonic Lodge #534, Chinquapin, Miss. (old community Post Office at the time). The Henley Field Lodge was chartered "under dispensation" of the Grand Lodge of Mississippi in 1911. The Lodge lost its charter May 15, 1938.

The old building was dismantled and the modern new facility (lower) shown above was completed about 1959. Many pioneer settlers of Pearl River County are buried in the church cemetery behind the building. These include the legendary Daniel Burks, who was in the "Battle of New Orleans in 1812," and his wife, Virginia Jane Smith Burks, paternal great grandparents of the author. Standing in the front church yard are Brother Eugene Murphy, president of Southeastern Baptist College, Laurel; Brother Glennis Bell, former pastor of Henleyfield; and Brother Milton Wright. All well known ministers in Mississippi and throughout the Baptist Missionary Association of America.

CHAPTER XIV

OLD DAYS AND OLD WAYS

There has been lots of change in south Mississippi and southeast Louisiana since about 1840 when a fiery young missionary and evangelist by the name of William Henry Varnado packed his bags, picked up his Bible, mounted his saddle-horse and rode away from the Osyka, Pike County, Mississippi, area to the southeast and into the lower Pearl River and Hobolochitto country.

The most radical and drastic part of that change has come to pass in the last sixty-five or seventy years. The Pearl River and Hancock Counties area along Pearl River has been the center stage of action. Old Gainesville, on Pearl River, now the sprawling National Space Technology Laboratoreis (NSTL) where motors which carried the first men to the moon were tested, is symbolic of such change.

The greatest change of so many changes, has been in transportation and modes of travel. The author has lived to see this evolutionary progress in travel from the time of the slow trudging eight-wheel ox wagon, ox cart, horse and buggy, through the coming of the model T Ford automobile, the propeller driven airplane, the jet propulsion aircraft with speed in excess of sound, the space craft and moon rocket. This has simply been too much change in too short a time for the human nervous system to absorb without damaging emotional disturbances.

There has been change in all other areas of society as well. It has all been extremely interesting and exciting. The last two generations have certainly been among the most exciting times in all human history.

In the "old days" there were "old ways" to do all things which needed to be done. People learn! God already knows! Young people have great knowledge. Old people have great understanding!

In the old days there were no modern highways. They were not needed; because there were no modern vehicles of conveyance and transportation which necessitated them. There were no railroads, for there were no trains. There were no sprawling airports, because there was no air craft to use them. At the same time fifty thousand plus people each year did not die in highway accidents, nor other thousands dead and maimed from train wrecks, and from airplane crashes. The air we breathe was a lot clearer and cleaner; and fewer died from air and water pollution. Only dim trails wound their way through the verdant timbered forest of this once peaceful land. The coming of the horse and buggy marked the trails a little clearer. Then the appearance of the horseless carriage, the first automobiles, demanded a better road of a sort; ferrys and crude bridges to cross the streams began to appear here and there. Prior to 1855 the historic old River Road from Columbia to Gainesville, Pearlington and old Shieldsboro (now known as Bay St. Louis) was the only road on a map of south Mississippi. The first bridge was constructed across Hobolochitto River in what is now northwest Picayune. There were ferrys at Pool's Bluff and at the old Ford Home to the north. The Indians used this old trail back into the dim past centuries. It was traversed by the early white explorers, traders and pioneer families who migrated to this area and settled. It is a much-traveled state highway today.

Most people had very little money in the old days. No modern technology, equipment, tools, gadgets and appliances to depend on. People made a way when it often seemed there was no way. This kept everyone busy. They rested good at night. No sleeping pills were necessary. The crime problem was minimal. When outlaws did appear, and create problems, the people had a way of dealing with the problem which seemed much more effective than our present system.

MOST PEOPLE WENT TO CHURCH

In the old days most people worshipped as they had opportunity. When a few families, though scattered, settled an area, soon there would be a move to establish a place of worship. And often these old places of worship served to establish the first schools. If our churches and our schools operated by the same principles as they did in the old

days; and maintained the same kind of relationship as worship and education did in the old days; our moral standards would be a lot higher; our goals a lot loftier; our aspirations more noble; and our hopes more real.

The first church houses were crude, rustic log structures. The first homes of many on the frontier were structured and styled about the same way. They were usually left with a dirt floor, and an open fire place with a mud and straw chimeny for heat in cold weather. Later the log houses of worship were floored with puncheon floors - logs hand-hewn flat on one side. Foundation blocks, sills, joist, rafters, and roofing boards were all hand-hewn, notched, pegged and fitted with great skill. Puncheon benches were patiently hewn and put together with great pride for seating. The buildings had wood shutters for windows and doors. This type building gave way later to the rough heart lumber type structure. The churches shared in the progress of the country. Soon the typical rural white frame houses of worship sprang up in communities everywhere. The descendants of these pioneer Christians now raise multi-million dollar houses of worship in this same area and across America. How sad it is that our spiritual well-being did not advance in the same measure.

There is an old expression common to this area when speaking of something being well illuminated, as being "lit-up like a country church." In the days before electric wires threaded the countryside, the old churches managed, by God's providence, to light the buildings for services. There was the ancient tallow candle. Then came the coal oil lamps. The author well remembers one type of lamp that hung on the walls with a tin reflector against the wall. There were more expensive kerosene lamps in some churches. Maybe a real kinda' fancy lamp would adorn the organ or piano, or maybe the lectern for the preacher. A few churches later installed a carbide light system, as did some homes. This was real "up town" doings. Other churches installed kerosene lamps which hang from the ceiling. Then about 1935 and 1936 the Rural Electrification Administration started a program bringing electricity to the rural areas.

Now we have central heating and cooling in our homes as well as in our churches. In the old days, they heated by the open fireplace, the wood-burning heater, kerosene heater, etc.

People opened a window for fresh air and cooling. Some stirred the breeze with a turkey wing fan; others had a fancy, folding store-bought fan; still others kept cool with cardboard fans given away to churches for advertising. If you did not have access to one of these gadgets, you just sit there, like nothing was bothering you, if possible, and wiped perspiration, or let it run. Of course, a long-winded preacher on a hot day could be rather disconcerting.

WORSHIP WAS IMPORTANT

In spite of what would perhaps seem unbearable inconveniences to us today, it evidently did not seem that way to our forefathers of long ago. In the old days it was common for people to walk for miles to church. It was that important to them. Many of the old preachers walked long distances to their appointments. As did their people, the preachers rode horse-back. Some by horse and buggy, or horse and wagon. It was a common sight to see horses tied all about the church on "church days" and at "big meetin' times." Dogs would often follow the family to the church; lay around the wagons and buggies until the family owning them would return and untie the horses and start for home.

Music and singing has been a part of worship services since Bible times. It was much a part of the church service in the more recent "old days." Our grandfathers and grandmothers can remember when some of the early churches had no musical instruments. Some of the early hymnbooks had the words of the song but not the music. But they enjoyed singing as a part of worship nonetheless. Often someone with a tuning fork, a small steel instrument with two prongs, which when struck sounds a certain fixed tone in perfect pitch: it is used as a guide in tuning instruments. With this instrument they would get the right pitch, and away they would go with the song.

Old-timers used to tell us about the old "Sacred Harp" hymnbooks. Another songbook used in the old days in this area was called "Dossy's Choir" hymnbooks.

The author can recall, as a boy, seeing and hearing people gather around the old bellows organ which was foot-pedaled by the organist. These instruments produced soft, beautiful music.

Many of the old churches soon acquired pianos. There seemed to always be a number of good music and voice teachers in the country. These men would conduct "singing schools" in the churches from time to time. These made a tremendous contribution toward the cultural development in the community.

Churches in the old days did not have "nurseries" for the babies, nor "children's church" for the children, as modern churches have to-day. Mothers would bring quilts and spread them about on the floor for the babies. The larger children sat with their parents, and were taught to behave, or wish they had. In this way children learned early what worship was all about. Children learned early that the house of God was a place to be reverenced and respected.

Churches in the old days catered more to a simple and general type of worship service which involved singing, prayers, testimonials, confession services at times; and majoring on strong preaching of the Word. Many of the churches in some areas had prayer alters.

It was customary in most of the rural churches for the offerings, sometimes referred to as "collections," to be received in hats. Very few churches had "offering plates" in the old days.

The early churches in south Mississippi and southeast Louisiana had difficulty in finding ministers to serve them. All the churches were small with usually less than fifty members. They had limited financial resources and most often expected a minister to serve without pay. In nearly all cases the ministers were dependent upon their own labors for support of themselves and their families. This doubly complicated the problem. Most of the ministers were no more able to go at their own expenses than the people of the churches were to pay them. If a church community were fortunate enough to have a minister residing in the area or near enough to reach the church, they could have services on a regular schedule. In many cases the churches had to depend upon itinerant ministers.

This situation prevailed in most areas in a lesser degree in rural and small town churches until after World War II. The author recalls a similiar situation in his first pastorate in Picayune, Mississippi, in late 1941, the church starting with only eighteen or nineteen members, called him for "quartertime" (once-a-month). He accepted it for "half time" (twice-per-month), but went to regular full time services after about two months. For some time his financial support ranged from \$2.50 upward to eight or ten dollars per week.

The old preachers used to talk, on occasions, about these days and situations. They always said that God, in His own way, would provide for His servants. The author has been trying to preach for 38 years to all kind of churches, large and small; some supported reasonably well, and others didn't. But he found that the Lord, in His own way, made necessary provisions for His own. Somebody had to suffer, sacrifice and "make do" so that churches could be established and taught in the Word. A man called of God will preach somewhere, if he is not providentially hindered. These men usually establish something along their trail as a memorial to the fact that they passed that way. The type preacher who waits for some one else to build something for him that will support him (and there's lots of these among us today), wouldn't have accomplished much in the old days. There is little doubt that the good Lord permits some things to happen, and some situations to exist, just to separate the true from the false; the genuine from the counterfeit.

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Obviously the churches exercised discipline much more in the old days than in our day. Discipline in churches in this day and time in

most places is almost unheard of. It is just about a thing of the past. Most churches it seems, have neither the courage nor desire to properly keep house for the Lord. Most have abandoned their responsibility on disciplinary matters. As a result, the churches have suffered great moral erosion.

Gleaning old church records here and there, it's interesting to note some of the recorded matters of discipline. Church business meetings, "conference," as they were often called, were considered a vital part of church life. In most business meetings there were matters of discipline against members to be attended to. One case in a southeast Louisiana church in 1822, charged a Black woman by the name of Molly "the Black Sister," with "disobedience to her husband." She was forgiven by the church after acknowledging her wrong. It seems the case was later raised again, reason not known, and she was excluded from the fellowship of the church. There were often complaints against members for "Intoxication," "Immorality," and "Dishonesty." Other offenses included "Frolicking and dancing," "continued absence from church," "using harsh language," "disobedience to the church," "unnecessary work on the Sabbath," "crime of fighting," "Tatling and Backbiting," and the like.

Discipline in churches is a scriptural responsibility. It is essential to good order. But discipline is never to be exercised as a matter of revenge against an individual. It is to be done in love for the good of those being disciplined as well as the church as a body.

It is the general consensus of opinion that Christian people loved one another much more in the old days. They surely trusted each other more. They had greater respect for one another. Churches themselves loved and respected one another more. Such things as competition between churches, religious prejudice, and proselytizing were not so prevalent in the old days as they are today.

THE SHAME OF THE RECONSTRUCTION PERIOD

The churches of the Hobolochitto Association, Mississippi, Louisiana, and all the South, suffered through the indignity of "Reconstruction" which followed the "Civil War." Reconstruction will live in infamy as the most shameful period of our history.

Southern white people were brought to their knees, and their possessions reduced to ashes by an unmerciful Federal Army commandeered by prejudice-minded abolitionists bent on revenge.

The author can remember his Grandmother, Eliza Jane Smith Stewart, telling of how people boiled and strained salt from the briny soil dug from their old "smokehouses" where they cured their meat. There was no other way, at the time, to get the salt they needed. It was indeed a difficult time.

Mrs. Julia Arledge Thigpen, wife of the late Samuel Forrest Thigpen (1864-1958) of Bay Springs, Mississippi, gives the most factual, vivid and practical account of this trying time I have ever read, in a book titled "Ninty & One," published by her son, Samuel Grady Thigpen, Sr.

Mrs. Thigpen was born in 1870. She grew up during the later years of the reconstruction period in south Mississippi. She lived to be 91 years old, going to be with the Lord in 1961. It was the author's privilege to be the pastor of "Uncle Forrest" and "Aunt Julia" at First Baptist Church (Known as Mt. Nebo from it's organization about 1828 until 1951) in Bay Springs.

Mrs. Thigpen called it "The most shameful period of our history."

"I can remember," she begins, "when I was a little girl, seeing old chimneys, sentinels of a vanished past, standing as stark reminders that once happy and prosperous homes had been needlessly and spitefully burned by Yankee soldiers, without pity for the defenseless and helpless women and children who lived in them while the men were gone to war. The most shameful period of American history is that period which began with Sherman's march of destruction from Vicksburg to Atlanta, and extended on through the days of oppression and revenge, called the reconstruction era, which was forced on Southern white people by the Federal Government.

"I was born in 1870 in the reconstruction period just after the terrible destruction of the Civil War, and the havoc wrought by the raids and burnings of property by Union armies, thus destroying the Old South, which, as Margaret Mitchell said, is "Gone With the Wind."

"In the Old South there was a type of culture peculiar to that period, a period in which slave and master prospered, and, in some cases, loved one another. I am glad the slaves were freed, because I do not believe in slavery, but it would have cost the United States government much less, and saved the South from ruin, if the slaveholders had been paid fair prices for the slaves they had legally bought and paid for in full. The United States spent many times more in fighting the war than it would have cost to pay southern slave owners for what was legally their property.

"During the early years of my life, from 1870 to 1890, elections were times of fear and dread in the area where I grew up. An election was a continuing nightmare to women. Almost none of the white men could vote as most of them had been disfranchised by the reconstruction acts barring those who had fought in the war from voting. This included even the young men as most of them had gone into the Southern army at young ages. My father enlisted before he was sixteen and served the last year of the war.

"A great majority of the voters were Negroes when I was a little girl; the only whites voting being those who had reached 21, and had not

served in the army. Designing white men, the scalawags from the South and the carpetbaggers from the North, completely controlled the Negroes and voted them as they pleased. A scalawag was a native white Southerner who had gone over to the Northern side with expectation of more profit and benefit to himself. A carpetbagger was a Northerner who came south after the Civil War to seek political and other advantage resulting from disorganized conditions prevailing at the time. They were usually malcontents, ne'er-do-wells and undesirables in the communities from whence they came. While there may have been some exceptions, the scalawags were the scum of the South and the carpetbaggers the scum of the North. Many unprincipled men were elected to office. These evil men sought to control the Negroes, not for the welfare of the Negroes but for their own selfish purposes. The carpetbaggers came to the South, at least most of them did, for the purpose of inflaming, rather than healing, the sores of war.

"Instead of becoming better, conditions under reconstruction became worse. To combat the carpetbaggers and scalawag control, the Ku Klux Klan was organized. Disfranchised as they were, the whites had no other way of protecting their interest and of promoting good government. For several years in the area where we lived there was a state of armed readiness for conflict between the Klan on one side and the scalawags and carpetbaggers on the other, the Negroes as the pawns they were contending for.

"By 1890 there was a new generation of white voters as more and more young men grew up. The white vote began to catch up with the Negro vote. As a result, men of greater integrity and competence were elected to office. The increased power of the whites in the Mississippi legislature enabled that body to call a constitutional convention in 1890."

Never has any one section of our country, nor any particular segment of our people, been so brutally oppressed, as were white Southerners following the Civil War, the American Indians, Negro ex-slaves, or other minorities notwithstanding.

These were indeed times "which tried men's souls." Out of the ashes of such a holocaust rose a generation of men and women with courage and character unequaled in American history.

Many of the old churches of the Hobolochitto Baptist Association, as well as other areas of Mississippi and the South, did not survive the hardships of the infamous reconstruction era. But the people, their principles and their institutions did, by the grace of God, survive. As a matter of fact, most of the churches themselves survived. They live to bear testimony to the saving grace of a once crucified, buried, risen and living Saviour. He is coming again in triumphant glory!

CHAPTER XV

THE STATE LINE YEARS - 1920-1943

The traumatic experiences of the past two decades was a timely reminder to the churches that there was strength in numbers and unity. In the common interest of the churches in both the Peace and Union and the State Line Associations, it was deemed wise for the time that the two associations merge into one cooperative work.

According to Eld. J. Q. Sones, it was never the intention of the churches of either Association to be disbanded nor discontinued. They felt that such a merger was best for the present crisis. Time has proved the move to have been a wise one.

The Pine Grove Baptist Church near Varnado, Louisiana, was host to the 1920 annual session of the Association. Eld. G. C. Knight, a prominent pastor and trusted leader among the churches in southeast Louisiana, was elected moderator; and bro. I. D. Pittman, clerk. Eld. J. W. Franklin preached the opening message.

The 1921 annual session was held with Old Palestine Baptist Church west of Nicholson, October 16-18. Eld. G. C. Knight again elected moderator; Bro. I. D. Pittman, clerk; and Bro. J. A. Moore, treasurer.

The following fourteen churches were represented with their messengers: State Line - Eld. A. G. Fortenberry, J. A. Moore, P. B. Kemp, J. E. Kennedy and Wilson Crain; Pine Grove - I. D. Pittman, G. S. Pierce, James O. Mitchell, C. W. Williams, L. L. Seal and Walter Smith; Oral - Eld. J. W. Franklin, M. L. Fortenberry, W. A. Fortenberry, N. C. Regan and M. E. Regan; Monroe's Creek - S. D. Crain, S. M. Carroll, Jim Adams, G. F. Williams, G. W. Tullus and H. H. Singley; Mt. Sinia - W. H. McNeece, D. J. Schilling, G. W. Nobles, T. L. Corkern, L. T. Simmons and J. D. Sheridan;

Carson Springs - W. E. McCrain, B. L. Gem and Henry Tynes; Ford's Creek - Jeptha Bilbo, Fielding Thigpen, Dolph Smith and Jeptha Burge; Varnado - Frank Glover, W. W. Boyles, T. T. Thigpen and Wallace Walker; Sones Chapel - L. T. Mitchell, Albert Smith, J. Q. Sones and P. R. Mitchell; Mill Creek - Luler Landrum, George Westbrook and J. C. Mitchell; Antioch Henry P. Howard, Net Reeves and Ed D. Howard; Macedonia - William Gibson, W. P. Beall and James Dossett; Old Palestine - Tom Smith, George N. Thigpen and Henry C. Patch; Pine - Charlie Knight, Carl Freeman, John Thomas, Bill Breland, Henry Crain and James Crosby. Those listed above are the messengers and alternates.

To get the meetings off to a good start and a proper atmosphere, there was always the "introductory" sermon. Eld. Thomas Dossett brought the message after reading from Ephesians chapter five. Eld. J. Q. Sones preached just a while afterward from the 4th chapter of I Timothy.

Others who preached during the three-day annual session were J. R. Gordon and J. W. Tolar. Eld. J. Q. Sones preached twice at this session.

The following committees were appointed and submitted reports during the 1921 session: "Religious Exercises," "Home Missions," "Foreign Missions," "Christian Education," "Sacred Music," "Prohibition," "Publications," "Pastoral Support," "Sabbath Observance," "Abstracts," "Orphanage," "Obituaries" and "Sabbath Schools."

Corresponding messengers were received from Black Creek Bethel and West Pearl River Associations.

Corresponding messengers were elected to represent the Association at the West Pearl River, Red Creek, Black Creek, Bethel and the Mississippi State Baptist Association.

The "Church Directory" page listed the following pastors: J. Q. Sones, McNeill, Mississippi, was pastor at Pine Grove, State Line, Varnado, Sones Chapel and Pine; J. W. Franklin, McNeill, Mississippi, was pastor at Oral; M. C. Thomas, Hackly, Louisiana, was pastor at Mt. Sinai, Monroe's Creek and Carson Springs; J. R. Gordon, Pine Burr, Mississippi, was pastor at Ford's Creek; Thomas Dossett, Picayune, Mississippi, at Antioch; and A. Jack Spiers, Picayune, at Old Palestine and Macedonia.

A resolution found in the minutes of proceedings of the 1921 session uniquely expressed the feelings of the messengers about the use and sale of alcohol as a beverage: "Resolved, That we, the State Line Baptist (Association) at Old Palestine church do hereby condemn the manufacturing and sale of 'white lightning,' beer, or any kind of drink that contains alcohol. We also demand of the officers (of the law) that have authority to enforce the laws . . ."

Another resolution adopted at the same session, declared: "Resolved, That we seat no messenger or any person who is not in full sympathy with our work."

For the next twenty to thirty years after World War I, the churches grew strong, firm and uncompromising in their doctrinal convictions.

The 1922 session of the Association was convened at Monroe's Creek Church in Washington Parish. Eld. G. C. Knight was again chosen moderator, and I. D. Pittman, clerk. Eld. Tom C. King preached a stirring message, it was said, to get the meeting "going in the right direction."

No records to show exactly where the 1923 annual session of the Association was held. It probably met in one of the churches east of Pearl River. Eld. G. C. Knight was re-elected moderator. Eld. J. M. Stuart preached the introductory sermon.

The 1924 meeting of the messengers of the churches was convened October 17-18 with Pine Baptist Church at Pine, Louisiana. This was the first meeting of the old Association with the Pine church

which had petitioned the association for fellowship at the 1921 session. Eld. G. C. Knight was again chosen moderator; Eld. J. Q. Sones, clerk; and J. A. Moore, treasurer. J. Q. Sones, as was previously arranged, brought the introductory message. Others who preached during the meeting was Elders George Smith and E. S. Haden.

The minutes show that the following committees were appointed: Preaching, J. M. Stuart and James Erwin; Missions, P. R. Mitchell, Eld. T. C. King and Eld. Tom E. Bennett; Christian Education, William Branch, Will H. Slaydon and Eld. F. M. Adams; Prohibition, Eugene Wells, E. B. Anderson and F. H. Hobgood; Sabbath Observance, Eld. Ben Toney, M. C. Ard and Carl Freeman; Abstracts, Dolph Fortenberry and J. F. Breland; Pastoral Support, P. R. Mitchell, H. H. Singley and A. Fortenberry; Publications, W. H. Slaydon, H. P. Howard and O. T. Temple; Orphanage, Eld. A. G. Fortenberry and Robert Thigpen; Sabbath School, Eld. E. S. Haden, Eld. J. M. Stuart and C. Breland; Sacred Music, Eld. A. J. Spiers, John Thomas and W. O. Knight.

Oak Grove Baptist Church near Franklinton, Louisiana, came into the body on petitionary letter. Fourteen churches in all were represented by letter and messengers. The State Line Church with 377 members, was the largest church in the Association at that time.

Mill Creek Baptist Church east of Picayune was host to the 1925 session which met October 16th and 17th. Officers elected were: Eld. G. C. Knight, moderator; Eld. J. Q. Sones, clerk; and Brother J. A. Moore, treasurer. Eld. J. M. Stuart was a very promising young preacher, and people like to hear him preach. He brought the opening associational message after reading Ephesians 5:14. The minutes noted that "it was a great message."

The opening hymn before the message was "Somebody Needs a Blessing." Other hymns which followed were "I Love to Tell the Story," "He Is So Precious To Me," "There is a Fountain," and "I Must Tell Jesus."

A well-intrenched custom from the very beginning of the old Hobolochitto Association some sixty-nine years before, was the host church and community preparing and spreading dinner for the messengers and visitors at the associational meetings. There seemed to always be more than enough for all to enjoy. This is a historic tradition of long standing among Baptist churches across the southland and elsewhere. It has enhanced the occasion of rich Christian fellowship.

Henleyfield and Mt. Olive churches were received into the fellowship of the Association on petitionary letters at the 1925 session at Mill Creek. Henleyfield had elected to leave the cooperative work with the Pearl River County Baptist Association and the Southern Baptist Convention, and return to the work and fellowship of

the old associational work. Sixteen churches were represented. All the churches of the previous year were represented except Oral, Varnado and Macedonia.

Eld. J. E. Sherrill, missionary for the churches of the American Baptist Association was a visitor at the 1925 meeting.

Eld. George Smith and Eld J. Alvin Rester were visitors from the Red Creek Association. Brother Rester was then clerk of the Mississippi State Baptist Association. He spoke to the body about the state associational work of Mississippi.

Ordained ministers listed in the minutes of the 1925 session are as follows: J. Q. Sones, A. Jack Spiers, A. G. Fortenberry, J. M. Stuart, G. C. Knight, L. G. Varnado, Elisha Boone, Adison Smith, James Knight, C. W. Williams, N. E. Clark, M. C. Thomas, B. S. Penton, J. A. Passman and J. M. Gordon.

Carson Springs Baptist Church in Walthal County, Mississippi, was host to the 24th annual session of the State Line Association; and the 70th annual session of the churches of the old Hobolochitto Association October 15-16, 1926.

Eld. J. Q. Sones brought the opening message from the Word of God. His text was Jude 3, "Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." Bro. Sones never failed to preach in the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit.

Brother Sones was elected clerk of the Association for the last time. The following year he was elected moderator again, a position he had held a number of years previously. Eld. G. C. Knight, truly one of God's faithful servants, was elected moderator for the last time. He had served as moderator seven times in all.

New Bethany and Union petitioned the Association for fellowship. There were eighteen churches represented. This represented an increase of two from the year before.

The 1927 session was held with Henleyfield church, Eld. J. Q. Sones was elected moderator, and Bro. I. D. Pittman, clerk. Eld. A. G. Fortenberry brought the opening message to a house filled with messengers and visitors.

THE POST-WAR YEARS

The years from 1919 to 1929 was the post-war decade. The hardships, heartaches and anxiety of the war years had come and gone. An abiding sense of peace had settled over the nation and the world. The joy of it was felt in the churches. Imperialist Germany had been soundly defeated. Multitudes of the country's finest young men had returned home. It was a time of great rejoicing, gratitude and reflection. The impact of it all was felt in the churches and expressed with outpourings of praise to God.

World War I was suppose to have been "the war to make democracy safe in the world." We know now that it did not. Only twenty-three years later our country and the world was plunged into war again. This time against Nazi Germany under Adolph Hitler, and his allies which included Japan.

But as our nation grew in number of people, more churches were constituted, and the older churches had increased in number of members. Many souls had been won to Christ under the preaching of the gospel; and many baptized into the fellowship of our churches. However, it seems that the moral fiber of society always deteriorates following all of our wars.

There was a feeling of great patriotism throughout the land. War veterans and ex-service men were loved and esteemed. Many of the young preachers pastoring the churches were veterans of the war just past. Patriotism and love for country ran high throughout the land, and most especially in the churches, until after the Korean conflict which came a few years after World War II.

DEPRESSION DAYS - 1929-1939

About 1929 the "Depression" came to the country. The national economy was in shambles. People were out of work. Employment could not be found. Financial institutions went under. The banks closed. Bread lines formed in all the larger cities. Thousands could not get enough food to eat. Millions of Americans were struggling to survive. It was indeed a difficult time.

In spite of the economic hardships which left people everywhere with little or no financial resources; the churches without sufficient financial support; leaving church buildings in a bad state of repair; some ceased to exist; and others merged as a way of salvaging either; yet people were closer to God; and closer to one another. People in the south maintained a rich sense of humor, which we would like to believe, was born of a strong faith in God. There was a great sense of loyalty to the churches. Attendance at most, if not indeed all the churches was better than in previous years when more favorable economic conditions prevailed.

Most of the men wore brown or yellow khaki work pants and shirts; some wore blue overalls to church. They were ususally immaculately clean and neatly pressed. Men, old and young alike, did not lose their inherent sense of pride and cleanliness. They felt that it was no disgrace to be poor. But that it was a disgrace to be filthy - in mind or morals. The author can recall a few young men who actually wore shoes with open cracks so large as to show their bare feet inside. The author was one of them. I feel that such experiences, while sometimes humiliating, made some of us better men. The reader may

have heard the saying: "I had no shoes, and I complained; until I met a man who had no feet!"

The ladies, like the men, dressed in such as they could afford. Their clothing, whatever it was, was usually neat, well fitted and beautifully worn. Very few people were ever heard to say, as so many would today, "I don't have clothes to wear to church!" A warm, vigorous spirit of gratitude, love and understanding seemed to prevail. History has taught those who cared to learn, that people cannot afford too much prosperity and remain true to God. There have been some few exceptions.

STRONG IN DOCTRINE

After the division of the old Hobolochitto Association in 1901-1902, the churches and the associational work had passed through a long period of re-building - through World War I and the great economic depression. The trying experiences of these years had left their mark on the churches and the Associational work. Elders J. Q. Sones and G. C. Knight proved strong and capable leaders. They were highly esteemed by all the churches. There were other real spirit-filled pastors who stood by them as "true yokefellows." Among the young ministers who made known their calling in those years, and who had been ordained by the churches in the years after World War I, was J. M. Stuart. As a young minister, he grew rapidly in the "grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ." He soon became one of the most respected preachers and leaders among old-line Baptist in south Mississippi and Louisiana. J. M. Stuart was obviously a god-called leader. Pastors and churches respected him as such.

Under the staunch leadership and example of such men as J. Q. Sones and J. M. Stuart, the churches throughout the associational territory were once again "established in the faith." The churches became doctrinally stronger. Old-time Baptists knew what they were, and could tell you why. They knew from whence they came, and whether bound! They were a family of Baptist churches with the brand of scripture and history upon them. J. Q. Sones and J. M. Stuart and their contemporaries had been blessed of God in helping to re-establish the churches and the associational work upon a strong doctrinal foundation. These men, their fellow pastors, and the churches were not "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine. . ." (Eph. 4:14).

MORE CHURCHES

The place of meeting of the 1928 annual session of the Association

is not known for sure. The 1929 session met with Cedar Grove church near Nicholson. The 1930 meeting was with Oak Grove church in Louisiana. Places of meeting for 1931, 1932 and 1933 is not known. Emmanuel church in Louisiana was host to the 1934 annual session. Old Palestine church near Nicholson entertained the messenger body in 1935.

Mt. Sinai church in Washington Parish hosted the annual session in 1936. From 1937 through 1943 the annual sessions of the Association was hosted by the following churches respectively: State Line, Oral; Pine Grove, Crane's Creek, Mill Creek, Monroe's Creek and Stony Point.

Eld. J. Q. Sones presided as moderator again from 1927 to 1943. Bro. I. D. Pittman was clerk from 1927 for several years following. Bro. P. R. Mitchell, a deacon at Sones Chapel church, served as clerk after Bro. Pittman on through 1942. Bro. Pittman was elected again in 1943. Bro. J. A. Moore served as treasurer of the Association from about the close of World War I to 1940. Bro. James R. Tate was elected in 1941.

Bringing the introductory sermons through those years were Elders A. G. Fortenberry, John B. Hemby, G. W. Riley, J. A. Tynes, A. Jack Spiers, W. A. Thomas, C. P. Toney, Locktie Tynes, Charley Lee, John E. Moore and J. M. Stuart.

By 1942, when the Association was convened in annual session at Monroe's Creek, the number of churches cooperating in the work had increased to 42. This represented a tremendous growth in the past forty years. The following churches made up the associational body: Old Palestine, Sones Chapel, Mill Creek, Henleyfield, Cedar Grove, Lee's Chapel # 2, Wolf Creek, Catahoula and Gainesville in Hancock County; Carson Springs, Oral and State Line in Walthal County; and Mt. Sinai, New State Line, Monroe's Creek, Varnado, Oak Grove, Pine, Crain's Creek, Union Avenue, Stony Point, Central, Pine Grove, Mt. Olive, Emmanuel, Terrace, Poplar Head, Centerville and Poplar Branch in Washington Parish; and Roseland, Bethel and Daigville in Tangipahoa and Orleans Parishes.

Serving as associational, or "local" missionaries at the time were John W. Miller, Arnold Spiers and J. C. Tynes..

In the light of the tremendous blessings of God upon His vineyard in the past twenty or so years, it had become the thinking of many for several years that the time had come to re-establish the two separate associations on the east and west sides of Pearl River as they were prior to the merger of the two respective bodies. It was their feelings that the purpose of the merger had been accomplished. Obviously, this thinking was justified. The working fellowship among the churches was rich and inspiring. All the churches were growing. A host of young men were answering the call of God to the ministry. It was the

dawning of a new day for old-line Missionary Baptists in this area. The fires of evangelism were burning brightly. A new and greater spirit of missions had emerged. The 1943 annual session at Stony Point Church was the last meeting of all the churches as one body. It was the last meeting of the two combined Associations. There was a realignment of the churches into their respective old associational territories at the next annual sessions.

Pastors listed in the minutes for 1942 and 1943 were: G. H. Byrd, J. M. Stuart, T. W. McDaniel, John W. Sones, J. Q. Sones, R. E. Sullivan, L. G. Varnado, Carl Sullivan, S. C. Hammock, J. Alvin Rester, John W. Miller, G. V. Hamilton, E. B. Toney, Charley L. Lee, R. L. Luttrell, W. R. Allen, John W. Thomas, Lamar Breland, L. S. Walker, C. P. Toney, Arnold Spiers, A. J. Spiers, L. L. Thomas, Joe Harris, Enos Branch, D. V. Jones, E. N. Landry, W. W. Lee, C. D. Arnold, W. E. Godshaw, Curtis H. Mitchell, E. E. Seal, L. N. Jones, John W. Duggar, J. W. Pope, John E. Moore, Royce McBeth, G. C. Knight, Zack Lee, August Holden, Andrew McCrain, E. S. Haden, Luther Stafford and Edmond Blackwell.

JIM STUART

Elder James M. "Jim" Stuart, a native of south Mississippi, living a part of his youth in Pearl River County, is considered by most who know him, as one of the outstanding preachers and leaders among Baptists in south Mississippi and southeast Louisiana. The late Dr. Ben M. Bogard of Arkansas, great America Baptist preacher, teacher and scholar, once said of J. M. Stuart: "Many people in Louisiana and Mississippi think there are not but two real preachers, and that J. M. Stuart is both of them."

Jim Stuart was born in 1895. He was saved when a teen-age boy. Reared in a Christian home by staunch Baptist parents. He was a veteran of World War I. He often stated that he knew God had called him to preach before he went into the Army to serve his country in the war. He made known his calling when he returned from military duty and began a long and successful ministry. He was ordained to the full work of the gospel ministry by old Bolivar Baptist Church in Tangipahoa Parish, Louisiana, in 1921. He has been preaching 58 years at this writing.

In a telephone conversation with Brother Stuart in July, 1979, at his home at Pine, Louisiana, our conversation ending, I said to him: "Take care of yourself!" In his true character, he snapped back, "I can't do it. The Lord will have to do that," to which I replied, "Amen!"

Like Paul, who said, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; . . ." (II Cor.

3:5).

J. M. Stuart has always taught his people everywhere to trust in the Lord for everything. Like Solomon, Israel's wise king, who admonished us to "trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:5-6). J. M. Stuart believed and taught that we should walk by faith, and not by sight.

Brother Stuart was amply endowed with strong leadership qualities. He is a dynamic preacher of the Word of God. He always stood firmly and faithfully for what he believed the scriptures taught.

He was always a busy man. Idleness was never a part of his philosophy nor his personality. The old Association minutes show that there were times when he preached regularly to as many as eight churches. It has been said that the number at times was more than that. He was certainly among the outstanding ministers of the gospel among old-line Baptists in the past half century.

Brother Stuart pastored the Pine, Louisiana, Baptist Church for fifty-one years. Very few men anywhere ever pastored one church that many years. This, within itself, speaks well for the pastor and the church. The Pine Baptist Church must be numbered among the great churches of the South.

Other churches he pastored include New Bethany, Wilmer, Carson Springs, Varnado, Canaan, Lawrence Creek, State Line, Pine Grove, Mt. Sinai, Crane's Creek, Henleyfield, Central, Liberty, Stony Point, Lee's Chapel #1, Mt. Olive, Pleasant Hill and Petitt Memorial, and Station Creek.

He was held in high esteem by all the churches. For many years when it was made known that J. M. Stuart was to preach anywhere he was known in south Mississippi, southeast Louisiana or south Alabama, the church house would be filled. He would preach in the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit.

BOGALUSA BIBLE COLLEGE

The old Bible College in Bogalusa, better known as "Bogalusa Bible School," was established under the leadership of Elder J. M. Stuart by Petitt Memorial Baptist Church on Avenue H in Bogalusa in the early 1940's. It was a great school. Many ministers of that time from Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama attended the school. It was not a large school as compared to some of our schools today. There were at times as many as twenty-five or more enrolled for classes in Bible and related subjects. Brother Stuart, as pastor of Petitt Memorial church, was the head instructor. He was usually referred to as the "Dean." He was an able and wise Bible instructor. Others who taught at the school from time to time included Mrs. Melisa Stuart, the good

wife of Brother J. M. Stuart, and a gracious lady indeed. She taught English; Dr. John W. Duggar, then pastor of Union Avenue Baptist Church in Bogalusa, who taught Bible and history. Dr. Duggar is now the president of the Baptist Missionary Association Seminary at Jacksonville, Texas.

Dr. Ed E. Rice from Pensacola, Florida, taught Bible. Like Brethren Stuart and Duggar, Brother Rice was a scholar in his own right. Others included Eld. L. G. Varnado and Dr. O. B. Harris from Gulfport, Mississippi.

The school's financial support came principally from Landmark Missionary Baptist churches in southeast Louisiana and south Mississippi. While the school was "owned" by one church, Petitt Memorial, it was supported financially by many churches. All did not agree in principle with this arrangement. There were those who thought that churches giving financial support should have a voice in the operation.

When Brother Stuart resigned as pastor of the Petitt Memorial Church, he continued the school for a while at Pine church. The Petitt Memorial Church and pastor also attempted to continue the school. Neither were successful. Both churches soon discontinued their school efforts. But suffice it to say, the Bogalusa school under the leadership of J. M. Stuart blessed the lives and enriched the ministry of some of the outstanding pastors, teachers, missionaries and evangelists in this area. It's ministry and influence lives on!

CHAPTER XVI

A NEW BEGINNING - 1944-1954

By the year 1943 the number of churches working together on both the east and west sides of Pearl River was greatly increased. There were a total of some 43 churches cooperating in the associational fellowship. The churches enjoyed a strong fellowship, an inspiring missionary zeal, a burning evangelistic spirit, and a genuine hunger for the Word of God.

It was now the predominant opinion throughout the Association that the large number of churches on both sides of the river justified a realignment of the associational territory and work. The Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Picayune extended an invitation to all the churches east of Pearl River to send messengers to meet with them for the purpose of such a realignment of the churches of the old Hobolochitto as it had been prior to the temporary merger of the two groups.

Fourteen churches sent messengers and letters for the eighty-eighth annual session of the Hobolochitto Association convened at the Mt. Calvary Baptist Church on Mitchell Street in Picayune September 7th and 8th, 1944. Churches represented were: Bienville, Arnold Spiers,

pastor; Rufus Mitchell, Elder Mitchell and Artis Bilbo, messengers; Catahoula, Chas. L. Lee, pastor; Lucie Seal and Viola Seal, messengers; Bethlehem, John W. Miller, pastor; Eld. Joe Harris, Vennis Mitchell and Archie Davis, messengers; Henleyfield, L. S. Walker, pastor; Josie A. Burks, Henry E. Burks and Hubert Mitchell, messengers; Hickory Grove, Joe Harris, pastor; Ellis Walters, Mrs. Alice Walters and Mrs. Francis Ladner, messengers; Lee's Chapel #1, John W. Miller, pastor; Mrs. Forest Spiers, Mrs. Carl Burge and Mrs. Albert Jarrell, messengers; Lee's Chapel #2, D. V. Jones, pastor; Eld. Jimmy Lee, Eld. Zack Lee and Eld. Woodrow Spiers, messengers; Liberty, Roger N. Hobson, pastor; Joseph Megehee, Jim Smith and Will Sherrer, messengers; Mt. Calvary, L. S. Walker, pastor; Eld. Curtis H. Mitchell, Mrs. Joe Pearson and L. S. Walker, messengers; Old Spanish Trail, August Holden, pastor; Tommie Spiers, Mrs. Bertha Spiers and Mrs. Francis Asher, messengers; Spring Branch, Hollin Stockstill, pastor; Mrs. Eugenia Holden, Mrs. Cruso Smith and Cruso Smith, messengers; Sunny Hill, Roger N. Hobson, pastor; N. S. Herndon, Alf Byrd and F. Herndon, messengers; Sycamore, John W. Miller, pastor; L. B. Stockstill, George Palmer and H. K. Stockstill, messengers; Wolf Creek, Chas I. Lee, pastor; Burdic Rester, Verelee Cuevas and Mrs. Roberta Brown, messengers.

The meeting was called to order by L. S. Walker, host pastor. L. S. Walker was elected moderator protem, and August Holden, clerk protem. Eld. Zack Lee led the congregation in an inspiring praise service. The host of messengers and visitors lifted their voices to praise the Lord in singing "We'll Word 'Till Jesus Comes," "Near The Cross," "I Shall Not Be Moved," "Lord, Revive Us," and "Leaning On The Everlasting Arm." Prayers were led by Brethren Noah Herndon of Sunny Hill church, Poplarville; and Dolph Miller, Sycamore church, Picayune.

The welcome address was warmly given by Eld. Curtis H. Mitchell of the host church. Eld. Arnold Spiers responded to the welcome.

Eld. E. B. Toney, veteran minister of southeast Louisiana, at the time living in west Picayune, brought the introductory message after reading from the 16th chapter of Mark's Gospel. Brother Toney was then serving as missionary for the churches of the Louisiana State Baptist Association. The congregation sang when they passed by to give Brother Toney a hand of appreciation for the stirring message. A free-will offering for state missions was also received.

The messenger body was organized by electing L. S. Walker, moderator; August Holden, clerk; and Curtis H. Mitchell, treasurer. It was noted that a large number of visitors were present from the State Line and Red Creek Associations.

Corresponding messengers were approved to represent the Hobolochitto at the Red Creek, State Line, Big Creek and the Loui-

siana State Associations.

The following committees were elected to submit reports: Committees on Missions, Christian Education, Publications, Sunday School, Pastoral Support, Ladies Auxiliary, Prohibition, Sacred Music, Temperance, Sabbath Observance, Evolution, Finance and Resolutions.

Eld. Charlie Lee preached, using as his text: John 3:16, at the eleven o'clock worship hour. The message was preceeded by a special prayer at the request of the moderator for "our men and women in military service" in World War II. The "chain prayer" was opened by Bro. Joe Pearson and closed by Eld. Roger N. Hobson. A quartet composed of Eld. Jimmie Lee, John W. Sones, Jr., and Eld. and Mrs. J. W. Sones brought a beautiful message in song. The entire service was fraught with great emotion.

Strangely enough there was only one death reported by the committee on obituaries: the name of William Frierson, a member of Mt. Calvary church who passed away August 23, 1943. He was buried at old "Turtleskin cemetery."

Eld. J. W. Sones preached from II Corinthians chapter ten on Thursday evening. Bro. Sones, as he usually did, preached in the power and demonstration of the Holy Spirit. He was a great lover of the Scriptures.

The Association elected four local, or, as some like to call them, associational missionaries. They were: Woodrow Spiers, Arnold Spiers, August Holden and John W. Miller.

Other ministers, other than the pastors, listed in the Minutes of the Association included, Woodrow Lee, Curtis H. Mitchell, A. Jack Spiers, E. B. Toney, Zack Lee and G. C. Stockstill.

Licensed ministers listed were: L. C. Burge, K. T. McKenzie, D. C. Varnado, H. K. Stockstill, James (Jimmie) Lee and Wilson Rester.

This session of the Hobolochitto, in some ways, was a "New Beginning." The body was once again composed of churches located in the geographical area where the historic Association had its beginning. It was a great feeling of joy, gratitude and triumph.

The Eighty-Ninth Annual Session of the Hobolochitto Association met with Lee's Chapel at Leetown October 4th and 5th, 1945.

The Minutes show that officers elected were L. S. Walker, moderator; August Holden, clerk; and Curtis Mitchell, treasurer. Eld. Zack Lee was elected Director of the Associational Fifth Sunday Singing. This quarterly associational singing had been organized for the purpose of encouraging, and where possible, assisting the churches, in the development of better choir, congregational and special music and singing.

The following twenty-three churches represented at the meeting of the Association at Leetwon: Anner, Bienville, Catahoula, Bethlehem,

Cedar Grove, Hickory Grove, Henleyfield, Lee's Chapel, #1, Lee's Chapel #2, Liberty, Macedonia, Mill Creek, Mt. Calvary, New Hope, Oak Grove, Old Palestine, Shiloh, Old Spanish Trail, Spring Branch, Sones Chapel, Sunny Hill, Sycamore and Wolf Creek. Nine of these were by petitionary letters.

Corresponding messengers received were: J. Alvin Rester, Emmett Sones and Johnny Davis, Red Creek Association; J. A. McGraw, Big Creek Association; J. M. Stuart, State Line Association; and J. W. Thomas, West Pearl River Association. Other visiting brethren included M. W. Matthews, Black Creek Association; J. E. Roberson, Editor of the "Candlestick" paper, Macedonia Association; Carl Sullivan, Big Creek Association; L. G. Varnado, Red Creek Association; and G. V. Hamilton, E. E. Seal and R. E. Sullivan, State Line Association.

Correspondance was arranged to represent the Hobolochitto Association at the State Line, Red Creek, West Pearl River, Big Creek, Black Creek and Washington Associations.

Eld. Sidney Cook, interstate missionary for the churches of the American Baptist Association, was a visitor to the meeting at Leetown. He was chosen to preach on Thursday night. After giving a brief report on his mission work, he brought a wonderful message from I John 3:2, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." A quartet composed of Jimmie Lee, Zack Lee, Willie Lee and Clifton Lee, sang, "Will The Boatman Be On The Shore?" The congregation responded with a generous offering for interstate missions.

There was not as much preaching at the meetings as in the old days, but there was still more preaching at the associational meetings than today. Eld. George C. Stockstill who had just returned home from military duty in the Pacific in World War Two, was chosen to bring the message on Friday morning. He read Luke 10:25-37. His subject was "The Good Samaritan." While the congregation sang, a free-will offering for local associational missions was received.

The Minutes for 1945 listed the following pastors: John W. Thomas, Arnold Spiers, Zack Lee, John W. Miller, W. R. Allen, Curtis H. Mitchell, L. S. Walker, E. B. Toney, D. V. Jones, Roger N. Hobson, A. Jack Spiers, G. H. Byrd, Lamar Breland, August Holden, J. Q. Sones, Joe Harris and Chas L. Lee.

Other ministers listed included: Walter E. Godshaw, E. S. Haden, L. N. Jones, Jimmie Lee, Woodrow Lee, Wilson Rester, E. J. Seal, Woodrow P. Spiers, Ernest R. Stockstill, G. C. Stockstill, D. Hollin Stockstill, Cullén Thigpen, E. B. Toney, Hubert Tynes and J. C. Tynes.

Licensed ministers were: L. C. Burge, Audith G. Davis, E. L. Byrd, K. T. McKenzie, Arthur Smith, Addison Smith, Homer Spiers, H. K. Stockstill and D. C. Varnado.

Lee's Chapel #1 was host to the 90th annual session in 1946. L. S.

Walker was elected moderator, and August Holden, clerk.

Oak Grove church in the Silver Run community east of Poplarville was host to the 91st annual session of the Hobolochitto October 2nd and 3rd, 1947.

Eld. G. C. Stockstill, at the time pastor of three churches, one full-time and two part-time - Lee's Chapel #2, Bethlehem and Spring Branch - brought the message for the eleven o'clock worship hour the opening day. He read from Nehemiah 4:1-23. He was presented by Eld. John W. Miller, a much beloved pastor and missionary of this area.

The author having served as moderator the past two years, requested that his name not be placed as a nominee for re-election. It was his contention that the honors as well as the burden of the responsibility should be shared with others. Elder J. Q. Sones who had been honored by his brethren in this position more times than anyone else, was elected moderator. Eld. W. R. Allen was chosen clerk; and J. Albert Mitchell, a deacon of Mill Creek church was named treasurer. George Amacker, choir director and Bible teacher of the Mt. Calvary Baptist Church was elected chairman of the Association's Fifth Sunday Singing.

The Minutes show that the following visitors were recognized: Eld. Walter Griffin, Texarkana, Arkansas, missions secretary for the churches of the American Baptist Association, and Mrs. Griffin; Dr. D. N. Jackson, the beloved and scholarly editor of the American Baptist, the second oldest Baptist publication in America; pastor of Parkview Baptist Church in Laurel, Mississippi, Laurel's oldest church, established in 1876.

Eld. J. Alvin Rester, Eld. R. G. Holland, a scholar in his own right; Elder J. A. Davis, Eld. Tevis Ladner, Eld. W. A. Stonecypher, Eld. Ray Hamilton, Eld. C. D. Arnold, interstate missionary; A Bro. Strahn; Eld. Curtis H. Mitchell, Eld. Carl Sullivan and Eld. Lamar Dale.

The Pastoral Directory in the 1947 Minutes show that the author was pastor of four churches: Mt. Calvary, full-time; New Bethel, Oak Grove and Old Spanish Trail part-time. Lamar Breland was pastor of Mt. Carmel, New Hope and Wolf Creek; Zack Lee was pastor of Anner and Catahoula; Kenneth T. McKenzie was pastor of at Antioch and Hickory Grove; August Holden was pastor at Cedar Point and Poplarville; G. C. Stockstill was pastor at Bethlehem, Lee's Chapel #2 and Spring Branch; L. C. Burge was pastor at Bienville; W. R. Allen was pastor at Cedar Grove; J. W. Pope was pastor at Henelyfield; E. B. Toney was pastor at Lee's Chapel #1; Tom W. McDaniel was pastor of Liberty; J. C. Tynes was pastor of Macedonia; Joe Harris at Mill Creek; Woodrow Spiers at Shiloh; J. Q. Sones at Sones Chapel; J. W. Sones at Sunny Hill; Roger N. Hobson at Sycamore; and John W. Miller at Zion. There were 29 churches represented at the 1947 session.

Elder August Holden and Jimmie Lee were serving as local associational missionaries. Eld. John W. Miller who was missionary for the Hobolochitto for several years, had been elected as an interstate missionary for the churches of the American Baptist Association.

Churches coming into the fellowship of the Hobolochitto on petitionary letters this year were New Bethel and Cedar Point.

NEW INTEREST IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

There was an obvious groundswell of new interest in Christian Education demonstrated at the 1947 meeting. The Christian Education Committee and the Resolutions Committee reports reflected a marked intensification of concern for a greater effort toward Christian Education.

The closing two paragraphs of the Christian Education Committee report recommended the following: "We further recommend, that, the churches of this association establish some kind of an advanced school for its preachers, teachers, and workers who are not in a position to attend elsewhere; and that this school be maintained by the churches through their missionary committeemen.

"We also recommend to the churches, that we give our wholehearted support to the establishment and maintenance of the Seminary to be established and jointly owned by the churches, which was recently begun at a meeting of church messengers assembled at First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Texas."

The Resolutions Committee, this same year, reported in part the following recommendations: "In as much as there are preachers and church workers among us who desire some kind of advanced or special Bible study; and whereas, they are not in a position to attend the schools away from this locality;

"Be It Resolved: That we recommend to the churches of this Association, to establish some kind of a special Bible Study which will meet the need; and that such a school be worked out, set up and maintained under the administration of the missionary committeemen from the churches.

"Realizing the need of a better trained ministry and better equipped schools among Associational Baptists, the messengers of the Churches of the American Baptist Association, met in the First Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Texas, September 23, 1947, and adopted plans to begin the work of establishing a Bible Seminary in Jacksonville, Texas, with the option of each state establishing and maintaining an extension school if they desired. In view of the course adopted by the A.B.A. conference, be it resolved that we, the messengers of the Hobolochitto Association petition the A.B.A. at its next session in order to place the A. B. Seminary on a firm financial basis, begin an

endowment fund to be raised by our churches in regular free-will offerings. Be it further resolved that we petition the B.M.A. of Texas to begin a similar fund for Jacksonville College. Be it also resolved that, we petition the Mississippi State Association to establish an extension school in Mississippi to begin class work not later than September 1, 1948."

SOUTHEASTERN COLLEGE ESTABLISHED

The following resolution was presented and unanimously adopted by the messengers of the churches of the Mississippi Baptist Association in annual session at Henleyfield Baptist Church in Pearl River County October 19th and 20th, 1948:

BAPTIST SCHOOL RESOLUTION

"It being unanimously approved by the messengers at the 1947 annual session of the Mississippi Baptist Association in session at Hopewell Baptist Church near Dorsey, Mississippi, that, by the authority of the churches we establish a church owned and operated school in our great Baptist state, and that his matter be referred back to the churches and a meeting be called by some church inviting any and all our churches to send messengers to represent them as to their desire relative to the establishment of such a school:

"The Mt. Nebo (now First) Baptist Church of Bay Springs issued the call which was responded to by a representative number of the churches from the several sections of the state. This inter-church committee also voted unanimously to establish such a school among us with all haste.

"At this meeting a motion was adopted to appoint a sub-committee to draw up a workable resolution to be presented to the Messengers of the Churches at the 1948 annual session of the State Association when convened with Henleyfield Baptist Church of Route 1, Carriere, Mississippi.

"Therefore, we your committee on Christian Education submit the following proposals:

"1. That, we the messengers of the churches of the Mississippi Baptist Association in annual session October 19th and 20th, 1948, recommend the establishment of a Junior College with a genuine Bible department. This school to be owned by the churches and operated by the equal and Biblical authority of the churches.

"2. Since the establishing of an accredited junior college is a job which will require much prayer, much work, time and money, we recommend that the Bible department be started this year, as we all know the need is urgent. That this Bible School with languages and other related subjects be started by the 10th of November, 1948, if at all possible.

"3. That the messengers select a group of seven trustees for the school, and that they apply immediately for a charter for the above mentioned school and select such teachers as will be needed, and that the trustees together with the faculty work out a curriculum of studies.

"4. That the trustees secure the building facilities of some of our churches which will be conveniently located and equipped to be a school building until, and only until, we can erect a building of our own.

"5. That the trustees be authorized to receive funds for the erection of a building or buildings and the maintenance of the school."

Your Committee,

L. S. Walker

L. W. Breland

C. D. Barton

The following were elected at the Henleyfield meeting to constitute the first board of trustees: D. R. Raper, Fulton; G. L. Boyd, Louin; L. S. Walker, Picayune; D. R. Ware, Neely; Alfred Jones, Columbia; M. T. Hill, Laurel; and Henry Burks, Carriere.

A motion prevailed that Bro. L. S. Walker (who drafted the resolution) be authorized to call a meeting of these brethren (trustees) immediately."

The author called the first meeting of the first board of trustees to meet up stairs in the old white frame building at Henleyfield as authorized by the messengers in session. The author was elected by the trustees as the first chairman of the board. The name "Southeastern Baptist College" was recommended by the trustees, and later adopted by the messengers. Dr. D. N. Jackson was chosen as the first president of Southeastern. A faculty was secured, and classes got under way in January, 1949.

The 1948 session convened with Mill Creek Church in Salem Community east of Picayune on Thursday and Friday, September 30th and October 1st. The author brought the 11:00 a.m. message on Thursday from Jude 1-15.

The body was organized by electing Eld. George C. Stockstill, moderator; L. S. Walker, clerk; and J. Albert Mitchell, treasurer. Eld. Jimmie Lee was chosen as Director of the Fifth Sunday Singing.

The report on missions was set as a special order of business on Thursday afternoon. It was noted that there was a marked increase in missions offerings in recent years, and especially the immediate past year. The letters from the churches reflected a growing concern for missions - local, state, interstate and world missions.

Eld. Jimmie Lee was re-elected associational missionary.

ORPHANAGE REPORT

Eld. L. T. Simmons of Louin submitted a report on plans for the building of an orphanage for homeless children at Louin. The home, now known as The Mississippi Baptist Children's Home, was first established at Louin. A large tract of land was purchased at Bay Springs for the purpose of building a new home there. It was later decided to build the home at its present location on Highway 15 North at Laurel. There was much enthusiasm at the meeting, and later in all the churches of the Hobolochitto Association, for the Children's Home. The churches have been generous in their support for the Children's Home from the beginning, and even more so today. The home at present has near sixty boys and girls, a splendid staff of workers. Brother G. W. Pierce has been the superintendent and general manager of the home for a long number of years. He and Mrs. Pierce are loved by the children of the home as well as by our Baptist people throughout the State of Mississippi and other areas where they are known.

The Children's Home is owned and operated by the churches of the Baptist Missionary Association of Mississippi. The home also receives generous support from churches in Louisiana and Alabama.

Visiting brethren recognized and seated at the 1948 meeting at Mill Creek included Eld. L. T. Simmons of Louin, founder and editor of the Mississippi Baptist paper, long time president of the Mississippi Baptist Association (now B.M.A. of Mississippi), and leader in getting the Mississippi Baptist Children's Home established. He was also an instructor in the early days of Southeastern Baptist College, and served as the second president of the school.

Others were Eld. J. Alvin Rester, clerk of the Mississippi Baptist Association; Eld. L. W. Breland, beloved moderator of the Washington Baptist Association; Eld. C. D. Arnold, interstate missionary for the churches of the American Baptist Association in New Orleans; Eld. B. H. Stringer, J. P. Hartfield, Paul Ruberts and J. A. Davis. Brother Davis was chosen to preach on Friday morning.

THE FAITHWAY MOVEMENT

What later came to be more familiarly known as the "Faithway" movement was initiated in 1947 by a small group of ministers who were ostensibly opposed to paying a set or stipulated salary to missionaries, pastors or other Christian workers. The objection came when the messengers of the churches of the Mississippi Baptist Association in annual session voted to pay two state missionaries \$9.00 per day for days on the field. This was nothing new nor different from what had been practiced in the associational work in the

past. The Minutes of the State Association, and the Minutes of the Hobolochitto Association, like others, show that stipulated or set salaries were a common practice from time to time.

The movement was a subterfuge designed to create emotional prejudice in honest and unsuspecting people some could not control otherwise. It succeeded in persuading some 34 churches in Mississippi to meet at Tabernacle Church in Purvis on January 7, 1948, and a second meeting at McHenry Church February 18, 1948, to organize a new state association. The new organization was named, "The Original Mississippi Baptist Association of Regular Missionary Baptist Churches."

In 1951, churches sympathetic with the movement in Louisiana and Alabama joined with them to organize a general body to be known as "The Interstate and Foreign Landmark Missionary Baptist Association of America."

This movement did not have a broad effect on the Hobolochitto Association. This movement has several churches in the area, but only four churches withdrew from the Hobolochitto to seek fellowship with the group who had made paying a set salary to Christian workers and feetwashing a point of fellowship.

Since 1806, when the old Mississippi Baptist Association was organized, some churches had "feetwashing" in the churches. Others never did so. It was never considered a part of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, nor was it ever made an issue. The churches have historically exercised the liberty to pay their ministers as they thought wise and prudent. Such matters were never made a point of fellowship.

The 93rd annual session met with Sycamore Church on Sycamore Road in old Sycamore community in northeast Picayune in 1949. Eld. John W. Miller was chosen moderator; and Eld. August Holden, clerk. Eld. Walter E. Godshaw brought the morning message on Thursday.

Lee's Chapel #2 at Leetown was host to the 94th annual session in 1950. Eld. Charlie Lee was elected moderator; and Eld. August Holden, clerk.

THE A. B. A. DIVISION

The American Baptist Association, the body whom the churches of the Hobolochitto Association identified with in their national and world missions work, suffered a most unfortunate division in their cooperative work in the 1950 annual session at Lakeland, Florida.

Some churches, mostly those influenced by the leadership of the Missionary Baptist Seminary in Little Rock, Arkansas, for some time had been sending messengers to the Association who were not members of the churches electing them as their messengers to repre-

sent them. Naturally, there was strong objection to such a practice. This finally became the principle issue which divided the Association.

After failing to get this matter corrected, the churches holding to the historic principle and practice that messengers must be members of the churches they represent, and growing weary of such bickering which had retarded the progress of the Lord's churches too long, in response to her invitation, sent messengers to meet with the Temple Baptist Church in Little Rock, Arkansas, in May, 1950, to re-organize the national associational work under the name of North American Baptist Association (now B.M.A. of America).

As unfortunate as it was, the division did not effect the churches of the Hobolochitto Association. Near one hundred per cent of the churches in the Mississippi Baptist Association voted to cooperate with the re-organized national and world associational work.

The Messengers of the Churches assembled at Mt. Calvary Church in Picayune on October 4th and 5th, 1951, for their 95th annual session. Officers were elected as follows: Eld. Charley Lee, moderator; Eld. John E. Moore, assistant moderator; Eld. August Holden, clerk; Eld. Walter E. Godshaw, assistant clerk. The name of the treasurer was not in the minute book. Eld. Zack Lee was elected Chairman of the Fifth Sunday Singing. The welcome address was given by Eld. B. Alfred Jones, pastor at Mt. Calvary who had succeeded the author who had recently moved to the First Baptist Church of Bay Springs after pastoring at Mt. Calvary for nine years since its beginning in 1941.

The 96th annual session was with Henleyfield Church October 3rd and 4th, 1952. After the opening devotional and praise service, and the appointment of several committees, and other preliminary matters, Eld. John E. Moore spoke to the congregation on "Christ our Refuge," in a message for the usual 11:00 a.m. opening worship service. The message got the meeting off on a high spiritual plane. The Association was enjoying a rich fellowship during these years. There seemed to be a great spirit of revival and praise in the hearts of everyone.

Eld. Charley Lee was chosen as moderator; and Eld. L. D. Whitfield, clerk.

The 97th annual session was assembled at Mill Creek Church October 1st and 2nd, 1953. Elder Lamont D. Whitfield brought the introductory message at eleven o'clock on Thursday morning. His subject was "Prayer."

Eld. John E. Moore was elected moderator; and Eld. August Holden, clerk. Eld. Leo Lee brought the message for the Thursday morning worship hour. The author, then pastoring the Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Chickasaw, Alabama, spoke on Thursday evening on the subject, "Eyes Which Are Upon Us." Eld. B. H. Stringer

preached on Friday morning. It was a most interesting and informative message.

A church by the name of Mt. Calvary in New Orleans was received into the fellowship of the Association on petitionary letter. The Association's Minutes make no mention of the church in the years which followed.

Lee's Chapel #1 west of McNeill was host to the 98th annual session in 1954. Officers elected were as follows: Eld. J. E. Moore, moderator; and August Holden, clerk. Eld. Leo Lee brought the Thursday morning introductory message.

The bountiful meals - dinner and supper on Thursday and dinner again on Friday - with tasty food arranged in the traditional manner in abundance by the lovely people of the Lee's Chapel church and community, reflected a historic tradition and the rich blessings of God upon us all. Such sharing and hospitality had been a practice in the churches of the old Hobolochitto Association for near a century.

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" - Psalms 133:1.

Those assembled at the meeting, like all those in the churches they represented, surely were "laborers together with God!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE SECOND CENTURY BEGINS

Preparation for appropriate observance of the approaching centennial of the Hobolochitto Association was begun in 1953 with the election of a committee of five who would make plans for the erection of a memorial to commemorate the historic occasion. The following were named to the committee: J. Albert Mitchell, Henry E. Burks, Ben Broom, Jake Smith and Ellis V. Spiers.

With the help of Brother J. D. Miller, son of the late Eld. John W. Miller, a piece of land was secured at the desired location. The author was asked by the committee to assist in designing the memorial.

Another note of interest found while searching the Minutes of 1953 for the information above: Eld. B. Alfred Jones, second pastor of Mt. Calvary Church of Picayune, had accepted the position as the first full-time president of Southeastern Baptist College in Laurel. He succeeded Dr. John W. Duggar, pastor of Parkview Baptist Church, Laurel, third president.

The 99th annual session met with Oak Grove Baptist Church at Silver Run in 1955. Eld. Luther H. Parrish, third pastor of Mt. Calvary Church, brought the introductory message to a packed house on Thursday morning.

Eld. Chas Lee and Eld. August Holden were elected moderator and clerk respectively.

THE CENTENNIAL SESSION

The growing Mt. Calvary Baptist Church was host to the One Hundredth annual session of the Association on the appointed dates in October, 1956. The messengers had, the year before, extended a special invitation to the author to bring the message at the dedication of the Memorial Marker. This would be the centennial message.

The Association was convened at the church at ten o'clock. After a brief devotional service, some necessary committee appointments, and the election of officers, a motorcade was formed to proceed to the Memorial Marker near the site on which stood the first rustic log house of worship of Old Palestine Church on the south side of the Nicholson-to-Jackson Landing Road. In addition to the host of church messengers and visitors of the Hobolochitto Association and numerous other churches, there was a large gathering of other friends from throughout Pearl River County, south Mississippi and southeast Louisiana for the historic ceremony. The author brought the dedicatory message which followed by the official unveiling of the handsome Memorial. It was a sight and an experience which the author will not soon forget.

The following wording is etched on the broad face of the granite memorial:

HOBOLOCHITTO BAPTIST ASSOCIATION 1856 - 1956

Old Palestine, the first Baptist Church in Pearl River and Hancock Counties, organized in 1842, stood just 300 feet south of this point.

Here the Hobolochitto Baptist Association was organized in 1856 with seven churches: Palestine, Elim, Union, Zion Hill, Bethel, Salem and Gainesville.

Eld. W. H. Varnado, the first missionary to this area, was the first pastor of Palestine Church and the first moderator of the Association.

This monument was erected in October, 1956, by the Churches of the Hobolochitto Baptist Association.

HOBOLOCHITTO BAPTIST
ASSOCIATION
1856 — 1956

OLD PALESTINE, THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH IN PEARL RIVER AND HANCOCK COUNTIES, ORGANIZED IN 1842, STOOD JUST 300 FEET SOUTH OF THIS POINT. HERE THE HOBOLOCHITTO BAPTIST ASSOCIATION WAS ORGANIZED IN 1856 WITH SEVEN CHURCHES: PALESTINE, ELIM, UNION, ZION HILL, BETHEL, SALEM, AND GAINESVILLE.

ELD W. H. VARNADO, THE FIRST MISSIONARY TO THIS AREA, WAS THE FIRST PASTOR OF PALESTINE CHURCH AND THE FIRST MODERATOR OF THE ASSOCIATION.

THIS MONUMENT WAS ERECTED IN
MEMORIAL BY THE CHURCHES OF THE
HOBOLOCHITTO BAPTIST ASSOCIATION.

The Baptist Memorial on the Nicholson-Jackson Landing Rd. in southwest Pearl River County.



Pictured above is the present facilities of the Mt. Calvary Baptist Church of Picayune.

Lower photo is the church's first house of worship after being renovated. The building was an unpainted rough lumber dwelling before renovation.

MT. CALVARY ESTABLISHED IN 1941

The following notes from "A Historcial Sketch" on Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Picayune are taken in part from files in the library of the Mississippi Baptist Commission on History at Southeastern Baptist College in Laurel:

The history of Mt. Calvary Baptist Church of Picayune is not a lengthy history, but it is exciting, eventful and interesting. It is one of two churches established under the leadership of L. S. Walker, its founder and first pastor. Antioch is the other church.

The church's unique beginning and subsequent development has been a profound experience of both trial and triumph. The church stands as a living testimony to the prayers, patience and perseverance of a few dedicated people who refused to give up. With faith in God, they pushed on in the face of much of the religious establishment of the area who said it could not be done. One attempt to establish a church in the community in 1935 met with failure in less than a year. A second attempt met the same fate two or three years later.

As far as is known, the records of the organization of the church have been lost. Just when or how this happened has not been determined. It is reasonably certain that the church was constituted on October 6, 1941. The first services of the mission and later the church were held in the home of Brother and Mrs. Joe Pearson at the same location where the east wing (Pearson) educational annex now stands.

Brother Walker was assisted in the organization by Eld. Roy Nester of Jasper County, Mississippi, and Eld. A. Jack Spiers. Brother Nester did the preaching in a revival which was continued with services nightly for three weeks.

The church, first called Emanuel, named changed to Mt. Calvary the following April, 1942, was constituted with the following charter members: Mr. and Mrs. Joe Pearson; Mr. and Mrs. Otis Stockstill; J. C. Pearson; Ellis Pearson; Mr. and Mrs. Joe P. Mitchell; Mr. and Mrs. Joe B. Mitchell; Mrs. B. I. Mitchell; Mr. and Mrs. William Frierson; Mr. and Mrs. Eastman Frierson; Mr. John J. Dillard; Miss Dorothy Dillard; Mrs. Minnie Flynn and Mrs. Mary Miles.

In the 38 years since the church's beginning (1941-1979) with nineteen members, it has grown to a membership of more than five hundred, and is believed to be the largest Association Baptist church of more than two hundred churches cooperating in the work of the Baptist Missionary Association of Mississippi.

The church petitioned the Hobolochitto (then called State Line) Baptist Association for fellowship at the annual session at Mill Creek Baptist Church October 17 and 18, 1941.

The church officially called L. S. Walker as pastor and called for his ordination. Services were held each Wednesday night and one Sunday per month. The pastor asked the young church to hold worship services two Sundays per month, and organize a Sunday School. Within about two months the church began full-time services - worship services each Sunday morning and evening; Sunday School each Sunday morning under the leadership of Brother John J. Dillard; and midweek prayer service each Wednesday evening.

Brother John J. Dillard was the church's only deacon. Having been ordained a deacon by the old Antioch Baptist Church, Picayune's first church of any kind.

Brother Walker moved his membership into the church after its organization. Mrs. Walker was baptized into its fellowship soon afterward. The families of Brethren Curtis Mitchell, Marcus Mitchell and D. C. Varnado were among the first to unite with the new church also. The church was beginning to grow. The fellowship was rich and inspiring. Zeal was genuine and interest high. The people possessed a genuine love for one another. It was a case where "the people had a mind to work."

The women of Mt. Calvary worked hard. They witnessed for Christ, and showed great love for their church. They soon organized a W.M.A. (then called Ladies Missionary Auxiliary) with Mrs. L. S. (Dorothy) Walker as the first president. A Training Service (then called Training Course) was soon organized.

The pastor's offerings for the first two or three months ranged from \$2.50 upward to about \$5.00 per week. Pastoral support, like support for missions and other associational work, soon began to increase.

Brother Otis Stockstill was the first church clerk. Brother Marcus Mitchell was soon elected to succeed him as he and his family had moved out of town.

The lot on which stood the somewhat ramshackled rough-lumber, un-painted building and home of Brother and Mrs. Joe Pearson, which also housed the church, was donated by Mr. G. H. Williams. The church proceeded to purchase, lot by lot, the remainder of the entire block. Later on, after the death of Mr. Williams, his heirs gave the last three of twelve lots in the block which the church now owns.

Brother Pearson and family soon moved out of the make-shift building. Within a few months work began to remove partitions, paint and remodel the inside to accommodate the needs of a growing church. Two additional rooms were added on the back or south side of the building for classes.

By this time Brethren Alf. A Mitchell, Sr., Elbert Dillard and his wife, Rosie; Bro. and Mrs. Ellis V. Spiers, Bro. and Mrs. Henry Petitt and their families and others had united with the church.

A front porch and steeple were added to face the church house toward the west. The pastor painted the entire outside of the building. Brother Curtis Mitchell helped him paint the rusty galvanized roof. Brother D. C. Varnado built the first pulpit.

Among the early ministers to preach in revivals at the church beside Bro. Nester, was Eld. J. M. Stuart, Dr. E. C. Gillentine, Dr. D. N. Jackson, Eld. M. E. Childers, Eld. J. Q. Sones, Eld. John W. Miller, M. W. Melton, J. W. Sones and T. S. Jackson.

The Minutes of the Association show that the church paid out of its receipts a total of \$666.19 to church operation and missions causes for the first twelve months. The pastor was paid \$259.65 for the year. Those were real "one hundred cents" dollars in that day, and the pastor made it with the help of Mrs. Walker who worked and contributed to the church as well as the family needs.

The church was moving forward in spite of a rash of malicious whispering by the religious establishment, most of who vehemently opposed the young growing church and its broadening influence.

The first deacons ordained were Brethren Marcus Mitchell, Curtis H. Mitchell, A. A. Mitchell, Sr., Henry Petitt and Ellis V. Spiers. Brother Rutel Mitchell later came as an ordained deacon from the Mill Creek Baptist Church. These were all noble and respected men; being sound in the faith, the church made good progress under their counsel and leadership.

In the late summer of 1944 the church initiated plans for a new building. A group of the men of the church met at the church one evening, knelt in prayer on the church lawn, and asked God to lead them in a building program. They arose from their knees, and proceeded to lay off and start excavation for the foundation of the present sanctuary to be 64 by 42 feet and the original educational facilities 66 by 24 across the south end. The walls were to be 12 feet high. At the time there was less than One Hundred Dollars in the building fund.

By this time the Lord was pouring out His blessings upon the church in many other ways. Brother Curtis H. Mitchell, a Bible teacher in the church, a deacon and song leader, was ordained to the work of the ministry. This was followed by the surrender of Brother D. Hollin Stockstill, one of our Bible teachers, to the ministry. He was later ordained. Then Brother Roger N. Hobson. These all became useful men in the ministry.

The new building program was launched with mounting spiritual fervor. The little flock had little money, but lots of love and determination. It could truly be said, "The people had a mind to work." Most of the men worked freely and diligently on the building until it was finally completed and paid for, with appropriate dedication ceremonies held a year or two later. The building, yet unfinished, was occupied March

24, 1946. Many disappointing experiences were encountered during the long drawn out building program. These experiences seemed to cement the membership of the growing church together. During and after World War II building materials were difficult to find and purchase, even if you had the money, which often the church didn't have. One very wealthy family in Picayune gave from a special foundation fund very lavishly to all the churches in the area except Mt. Calvary. The one who seemed to exercise control of the fund angrily refused to give Mt. Calvary anything. This very experience proved a blessing in disguise. It fired the zeal and determination of the members of the church and their friends. It drove the church to its knees before God. They learned to trust in God, not in men. The Lord supplied the church's needs abundantly.

When the new building was formally dedicated April 10, 1949, the marble "corner stone" was paid for by the W. D. Powers family. The "1935" date of "organization" shown on the corner stone of the sanctuary was put there at the suggestion of the pastor only for the purpose of paying fitting tribute to the memory of those who first tried so earnestly to establish a church in the community. The actual date of constitution of the present church was October 6, 1941.

Mt. Calvary church always stood uncompromisingly for what she believed the Word of God to teach. The church always manifested a sweet spirit of love and a desire to cooperate in the Lord's work with her sister churches of like faith and order. The church possessed certain qualities of Christian responsibility and prudent leadership.

Continued growth in the membership soon found the church ordaining additional men to the office of deacon. Brethren Wiley Rester, Cliff Crocker, Claiborne Bounds and C. B. Bales were added to the staff of deacons by formal ordination. Brother Ben Broom, an ordained deacon, came into the church by transfer of membership from the First Baptist Church in Picayune. Some time later he was elected as church treasurer where he served for many years. Brother George Amacker and his wife came into the church. Brother Amacker served as song leader for some time. Mrs. Ava Pettitt had served as the church's first pianist. Miss Betty Faye Williams soon became one of the church's regular pianist.

The church started publishing a weekly bulletin in March, 1949. By this time the church membership had increased from 19 to 221. The church gave liberally to missions, educational and benevolent associational causes from her very beginning. Sunday School attendance had grown to an average of over one hundred by 1949. The W.M.A. was divided into three circles - Dorothy Walker circle; Birdie Mitchell circle; and Mary Reeves circle. A Sunbeam group for children was organized. The Training Service was showing growth.

The first regular radio broadcast on the Picayune (WRJW) station,

"The Baptist Missions Hour," was initiated by Pastor L. S. Walker and Mt. Calvary Church in 1949.

L. S. Walker resigned the pastorate of the church after more than nine years to accept the call of the First Baptist Church of Bay Springs, Mississippi. Eld. B. Alfred Jones of Columbia was called as the church's second pastor.

After about two and a half years, Brother Jones resigned to accept the position as president of Southeastern Baptist College in Laurel. Eld. Luther H. Parrish accepted the church to become the third pastor. Brother Parrish remained as pastor almost nine years.

Eld. Kenneth W. Flynt succeeded Bro. Parrish to be the fourth pastor. After the resignation of Bro. Flynt to accept the call of First Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Texas, Eld. Kenneth Tatum came as pastor, but remained with the church only some seven months. Eld. B. H. Stringer pastored from October, 1967 to March, 1969. He was followed by Eld. Robert Bullock who pastored from June, 1969 to April, 1975.

L. S. Walker was called to serve as interim pastor for a few months before the church called Brother Kenneth W. Flynt who accepted the call to return to the church for his second time as pastor.

The Mt. Calvary Church enjoyed a steady growth from its beginning. Organized with 19 charter members, it represented at the annual session of the local Association a few weeks after its organization with 29 members. By 1948 the church had become the largest in membership in the Hobolochitto Association with 220 members. By 1951 the membership had increased to 238. From 1941 to 1951 the young church baptized 145 and received 229 by letters. A total of 374 increase in membership the first ten years. It is still the largest church in the Hobolochitto Association, and also the largest in the B.M.A. of Mississippi with more than 500 members.

Others who went out from the church to preach the gospel other than Brethren Curtis H. Mitchell, D. Hollin Stockstill and Roger N. Hobson, are Ellis V. Spiers, Lloyd Rester, Ed Steele and Billy Wheat.

Others who were later ordained as deacons include Brethren Hubert Douglas, A. L. Cassanova, W. J. Downes, Jr., Glenn Adcox, Billy Graham, Charles Bounds and Earl Smith.

ANTIOCH CHURCH

The following is noted from "Historical Sketch on Antioch Baptist Church on East Canal Street in Picayune, Mississippi," from files in Mississippi Baptist Commission on History at Southeastern Baptist College, Laurel, Mississippi:

Antioch Baptist Church on East Canal Street in Picayune, Mississip-

pi, was organized October 16, 1945, from a mission established and sponsored by the Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Picayune under the leadership of Pastor L. S. Walker. Antioch was the second of two Picayune churches constituted under the leadership of L. S. Walker.

Charter members were Mr. and Mrs. Joe Williams; Mrs. and Mrs. Johnnie K. Mitchell; Mrs. Bertie Jordan; Mrs. Rachel Lanoir; Mr. and Mrs. Bill Trimm; Mrs. Eva Stewart; Mrs. Lydia Howard; Mrs. Editor Mitchell; Mrs. Martha Carroll; Mrs. Geneva Davis; and Mr. and Mrs. Cullo Davis.

Prayer, Bible study and preaching services started in the early part of 1945 in the home of Brother and Mrs. Joe Williams on East Canal Street, Brother and Mrs. Williams donated the orginal lots where the church's house of worship now stands. Services were first conducted on Tuesday evenings. Later Sunday afternoon services were added. Then a Sunday School was organized by the Mt. Calvary Church. Interest in the growing community increased so rapidly and favorably that it was decided to establish a church. The October date was set.

Most of the charter members were members of Mt. Calvary Church. A few had been members of an old Baptist church by the name of Antioch which stood near the south banks of the Hobolochitto Creek at the site of old Antioch cemetery. Old Antioch was Picayune's first church of any kind, established about 1882 when the Southern Railroad was built through this area. The old church was a victim of the "Depression" years, and ceased to exist in the mid 1930's.

The new church voted to memorialize the name of the first church established in Picayune by adopting the name of Antioch. Thus, Antioch Baptist Church was established and named.

The church voted to begin construction of a house of worship as soon as possible. Plans for a small frame structure were drafted and adopted in regular business conference. Bro. L. S. Walker went to a saw mill near Logtown owned and operated by Mr. Eddie Walker of Picayune. He asked Mr. Walker to cut and deliver the bill of materials for laying the foundation and framing the building to the church building site, and to hold him responsible for the money. In about ten days the lumber was delivered. Mr. Johnnie K. Mitchell, the church's only deacon, took the initiative, the other men with him, the enthusiastic congregation immediately raised the full amount of money needed, and paid the bill. Work on the building was begun immediately.

Despite some ugly opposition and interference from a competitive religious group, interest mounted with great dispatch. The new church gained favor in the community. The opposition folded their tents like the Arabs, and silently stole away. The fellowship in the church was inspiring. God was richly blessing; and the people were

happy in the work of the Lord.

While the house of worship was yet under construction, the young flock called Eld. George C. Stockstill as their first full-time pastor. He accepted the call, the building was completed, and the church continued to grow under his leadership. Brother Stockstill had just returned from the Pacific theatre of war where he was seriously wounded in battle in the Philippine Island campaign in World War II.

The church pastors included L. S. Walker, 1945; G. C. Stockstill, 1946; Kenneth McKenzie, 1947; Walter E. Godshaw, 1948 to 1952; Edward Hart, 1953-1954; Buford C. Smith, 1955-1956; Obie Johnson, 1957; Wiley Madden, 1958-1965; Harold Smith, 1967-1968; David E. Steele, 1969-1971; Randal Knight, 1972; Henry C. Phelps, 1973; L. C. Coker, 1974; Richard Smith, 1975-1978; and Steve Smith present (1979) pastor.

The church voted to change its name in the mid 1950's to Pineview. This proved to be a cause of great difficulty in the church. The name was subsequently changed back to "Antioch."

Antioch, like the mother church, Mt. Calvary, has always cooperated with the Hobolochitto Baptist Association, the Baptist Missionary Association of Mississippi, and the Baptist Missionary Association of America.

Antioch is probably experiencing her best growth ever. The current membership is about 200 or more, we are told. The present neat red brick sanctuary and educational wing is debt-free. The pastor and his wife live in the near-by pastorum. The church has recently purchased additional land for future expansion. There is a good fellowship and a sweet, sweet spirit in the church. They have a very active Sunday School, Training Service, Brotherhood, W.M.A., G.M.A., Galilean group, and other activities and opportunities for Christian service.



ANTIOCH BAPTIST CHURCH, Picayune

Pictured (upper photo) above is church's first building. (Lower photo) is pictured the present church plant.

WOLF CREEK BAPTIST CHURCH SINCE 1907

The date of organization of Wolf Creek Baptist Church in Hancock County, Mississippi, is not known for certain. The old church records were destroyed in a fire which destroyed the church clerk's home during the early years of the church. However, it is believed by older members that the church was organized in 1907. The date on the land deeds of church land donated by Brother and Mrs. Wilson Rester is May 23, 1908. The deed is recorded in the land deed records at Bay St. Louis.

Like most new churches of that day and time, old Wolf Creek church experienced many difficult trials. There were times when it seemed the church could not continue to hold together. But, by God's grace, it did!

All the early pastors may not be known. It is believed that Eld. L. N. Jones led in the organization and became the church's first pastor about 1907. Eld. Wilson Rester was believed to have been among the charter members, and once pastored the church for some time.

Eld. Charley Lee pastored the church from about 1938 through 1946. Bro. Lee led the church to cooperate with the Hobolochitto Baptist Association. It has cooperated with this old Association ever since.

Other pastors included: Lamar Breland, 1947; Vert Ladner, 1948-1951; August Holden, 1953-1954; J. O. Cuevas, 1955-1958; Gene Pinkston, 1962; J. O. Cuevas, 1963-1964; Vardamon Spiers, 1965-1966; Vert Ladner, 1967-1974; L. D. Whitfield has pastored since 1975 to present time.

The church presently worships in a comfortable white cement block structure - sanctuary and two educational rooms. A larger educational annex is about completed which will provide a large assembly area, several class rooms and rest rooms. The church is probably enjoying the best progress ever.

THE CHURCH "DOWN BY THE OLD MILL STREAM"

The Mill Creek Baptist Church in the Salem Community on Highway 43, East, Picayune, Mississippi, was constituted November 23, 1909, with the following charter members: Mr. and Mrs. Lott Smith, Eld. and Mrs. Addison Bounds, Mr. and Mrs. J. R. Bounds, Mr. Mason Smith and Mr. S. J. Johnson.

The church took its name from the small creek which runs by the old home place of Elder Hardy Smith, where the church was formally set in New Testament order. It was at this old place and other homes in the community where the happy little group first conducted worship and praise services. Services were later held in the community

school: first called New Hope, then Mill Creek, and yet later, Salem.

The first building, older members said, was erected near old Salem school where it is presently located. A second building was begun in 1938, and completed in 1948. The present sanctuary was erected from 1957-1960. It was dedicated August 4, 1960.

A new and modern educational annex, called Memorial Chapel, was erected free of indebtedness, and dedicated with appropriate ceremonies in April, 1973.

Eld. Andrew Jackson (Jack) Spiers led the small congregation in building the first house of worship. They had worshipped in homes and a school building for the first nine or ten years after its organization. "Aunt Jeannie" Gordon, the mother of Eld. Granville H. Gordon, told about watching Brother Spiers rive the cypress boards for the roofing by hand. It was an arduous task to undertake about 1916.

Eld. George Huey Byrd was pastor of the church when the second building was erected. The present sanctuary was constructed while Eld. M. E. Brooks was pastor. The first pastorum was completed under the leadership of Eld. Joe Harris. The present pastorum was built while Eld. Herman Hickman was pastor.

The last building program, "Memorial Chapel" educational annex, was during the pastoral tenure of Eld. L. S. Walker. It was during this time the church adopted its first regular systematic financial budget, modernized all other buildings and facilities, and began a bus ministry.

Eld. Peter P. Smith, son of Eld. Hardy Smith, was the church's first pastor from 1909 to 1913. John A. Price (1913-1917) was the second pastor. E. R. Boone was the third pastor (1917-1918); and A. Jack Spiers was number four (1918-1924).

Others were: J. Q. Sones, 1925-1930; June Hartfield, Dec. 1930 to Oct. 1933; George W. Riley, Oct. 1933 to Sept. 1937; J. W. Brown, Dec. 1937 to Feb. 1938; G. H. Byrd, April 1939 to Dec. 1945; Joe Harris, Dec. 1945 to Nov. 1948; John W. Miller, Dec. 1948 to March 1949; J. Alvin Rester, April 1949 to Sept. 1950; August Holden, Sept. 1950 to Sept. 1951; Joe Harris, Sept. 1951 to Sept. 1954; Leo Lee, Sept. 1954 to Jan. 1959; M. E. Brooks, March 1959 to May 1962; L. D. Whitfield, Nov. 1962 to Jan. 1965; Herman Hickman, March 1965 to Oct. 1968; L. S. Walker, Nov. 1968 to June 1975; G. C. Stockstill was interim pastor during June and July of 1975; B. H. Stringer, Aug. 1975 to Sept. 1977. John E. Moore from September 1977 to the present.

Mill Creek Church has been identified with the work of old-line Missionary Association, sometimes called Landmark Baptist, since its humble beginning "down by the old Mill Stream!"

A group of excluded members organized a church and built a place of worship nearby about 1948 to be identified with a new group calling themselves "Faithway" Baptist. Mill Creek has continued to grow

in number; in spirit and influence. Many precious souls have found Christ through her ministry.



Mill Creek Baptist Church, Picayune, Mississippi

The first annual session of the second century since the organization of the historic Hobolochitto was hosted by the Henleyfield Church in 1957. Eld. August Holden, referred to by many who knew him well, as "the old war horse," brought the introductory message at eleven o'clock on Thursday morning. August Holden was an humble but fearless man when he thought he was right. When he preached, it was not difficult to know that he meant what he said. Consequently, he captured and held his listeners attention.

Eld. Luther H. Parrish was elected moderator. Luther Parrish is a noble man, a great pastor and teacher. He has now for a long number of years been one of the most beloved and able writers of the Baptist Training Service and Sunday School quarterlies.

Eld. August Holden was again chosen clerk of the Association. Eld. Walter E. Godshaw was elected treasurer.

Lee's Chapel #1 was host to the 102nd annual session October 3rd and 4th, 1958. The following 21 churches were represented by messengers and letters: Benville, also known as "Bienville," it being located in the Bienville community, Walter E. Godshaw, pastor; Bethlehem, George Jones, pastor; Cedar Point, D. Hollin Stockstill,

pastor; Community, Walter E. Godshaw, pastor; East Pearl, Jimmie Lee, pastor; Henleyfield, R. E. Sullivan, pastor; Hickory Grove, Charles Prine, pastor; Lee's Chapel #2, J. E. Moore, Sr., pastor; Mt. Calvary, Luther H. Parrish, pastor; Mt. Carmel, H. K. Stockstill, pastor; Mill Creek, Leo Lee, pastor; New Bethel, Lloyd Rester, pastor; New Hope (Ozona), George Palmer, pastor; Oak Grove, Tevis Ladner, pastor; Pine View (Antioch), Wiley Madden, pastor; Old Spanish Trail, August Holden, pastor; Shiloh, D. J. Price, pastor; Spring Branch, August Holden, pastor; Sycamore, Buford Smith, pastor; New Hope (Cross Roads), Carl Walker, pastor.

Eld. A. V. Stockstill was presented, and brought the "annual sermon" for the eleven o'clock Thursday morning worship hour.

Pastor Luther H. Parrish was chosen to a second term as moderator. Missionary-pastor August Holden was again elected clerk; and Brother Walter E. Godshaw, treasurer. Brother Ben Broome was voted to be chairman of the Association's Fifth Sunday Singing.

The messenger body voted to continue Eld. August Holden as associational missionary. The "Radio Committee" was composed of Brethren Jimmie Lee, Riley Sullivan and Wiley Madden. The messengers named Pastors Luther Parrish and John E. Moore as "Radio Evangelists." Their responsibility was to conduct the regular Sunday morning broadcast over radio station WRJW, Picayune.

The "Rules of Decorum" as traditionally done, was "Distinctly" read from the chair immediately after the election of offices.

The following ordained ministers were listed in the Association's 1958 Minutes: Wiley Madden, George Jones, James (Jimmie) Lee, Floren Lee, Charlie Lee, Luther H. Parrish, Leo Lee, Walter E. Godshaw, Buford Smith, George Palmer, J. B. Stonecypher, Maxie D. Stephens, Davis Ladner, Carl Walker, E. C. Walker, D. Hollin Stockstill, E. S. Haden, William Mitchell, George Tommy Spiers, Lloyd Rester, Obie Johnson, R. E. Sullivan, John E. Moore, A. E. Page and Vert Ladner.

The following reports were presented, discussed, and finally adopted during the 1958 session: Missions, Christian Education, Children's Home, W.M.A. (Women's Missionary Auxiliary), Brotherhood, Church Discipline, B.T.S. (Baptist Training Service), Sunday School Abstracts and Resolutions.

A total of 78 baptisms were reported. There were 110 additions by "letters," making a total of 188 additions to the churches for the associational year. Mt. Calvary Church led with 19 by profession of faith and baptism and 23 by transfer (letter) of membership - 42 additions in all. Mt. Calvary also reported the largest membership of all the churches of the Association with 264 of record. Henleyfield was second in membership in 1958 with 203 members. All except two churches reported full-time services. The day of part time services in the

churches was coming to a close.

Hosting the annual sessions from 1959 through 1968 respectively were: Antioch, Spring Branch, Bienville, Oak Grove, Mill Creek, Lee's Chapel #2, Oak Grove, Henleyfield and College Heights. Elected moderator for these years were: Wiley Madden, 1959; Tevis Ladner, 1960; Charlie Lee, 1961 and 1962; L. D. Whitfield, 1963; Wiley Madden, 1964; J. V. Lee, 1965; J. E. Moore, 1966, 1967 and 1968.

Elected clerk for the same years: August Holden, 1958 through 1961; J. E. Moore, 1962 through 1965; and W. R. Allen, 1966 through 1968.

Walter E. Godshaw was elected treasurer for all these years - 1959 through 1968. In fact, Brother Walter E. Godshaw served the churches as treasurer of the Association from 1954 until his health failed him, causing his resignation, in 1975. He served as treasurer longer than any other man in the history of the Hobolochitto Association.

The Minutes of the Association notes those who were selected to bring the "annual message" for these sessions were: Lloyd Rester, M. E. Brooks, H. K. Stockstill, Gene Pinkston, Robert Bullock, George Jones, J. V. Lee, Vardamon Spiers, Roger N. Hobson and Milburn Cockrell.

Ordained ministers listed in the Minutes for the decade of 1959 to 1968 were: Wiley Madden, James C. Lee, Charlie Lee, Luther H. Parrish, Leo Lee, Walter E. Godshaw, Buford C. Smith, George Palmer, Tevis Ladner, August Holden, William Mitchell, Lloyd Rester, R. E. Sullivan, John E. Moore, A. E. Page, Vert Ladner, Maxie D. Stephens, Obie Johnson, H. K. Stockstill, J. V. Lee, E. C. Walker, Tommy Spiers, L. C. Cuevas, D. J. Price, Frank Selph, George Jones, Webber Jarrell, Clinton Parker, Howard Rhoden, M. E. Brooks, G. A. Hedgepeth, Mardice Mitchell, Robert J. Bullock, W. R. Allen, Farrell Davis, J. O. Cuevas, O. G. Hankins, Oree Sullivan, Wilson Rester, Gene Pinkston, E. A. Ball, L. G. Varnado, William English, L. D. Whitfield, Simon Stockstill, Delos E. Husser, Harold Smith, Kenneth W. Flynt, Ralph Brand, Owen Patton, Thelbert Hill, Clyde Page, Levi Reynolds, Buford Dillard, J. C. Tynes, Herman Hickman, Roger N. Hobson, J. D. Miller and Joseph Miller. Brethren J. D. and Joseph Miller are both the sons of the late John W. Miller, for many years missionary for the churches of the Hobolochitto Association, and later interstate missionary for the churches of the Baptist Missionary Association of America.

Serving the churches as associational (local) missionary through the decade from 1959-1968 were Howard Rhoden, Leo Lee, and Roger N. Hobson.

This seemed to be a low period in associational interest and growth. The number of churches representing at the annual sessions for this

decade reached the lowest average of any comparable period since before 1920.

The minutes show only four new churches petitioning the Association for fellowship, and two of these soon ceased to exist. College Heights, Poplarville, was received into the working fellowship of the Association at the 1962 meeting. Union, in the Jackson Landing community, petitioned the Association in 1963. It continued as a body for a very short time, and was then dissolved. Southside, in south Picayune, was organized in 1965, petitioning the Association the same year. It continued for a very short time. Westlawn Church on Jackson Landing Rd. in southwest Picayune, was constituted in December, 1964, under the leadership of associational missionary Leo Lee, as a missions project of the Hobolochitto Association. It came into the work of the Hobolochitto in 1965 annual session in September at Lee's Chapel #2.

Pastor at Westlawn since its organization include: Leo Lee, 1964-1966; L. D. Whitfield, 1967; and Roger N. Hobson since 1968.

The Hobolochitto Association minutes for 1968 listed the deacons of the churches as follows: Johnnie K. Mitchell, W. A. Breland, Rufus Mitchell, Clark Lee, Raford Mitchell, Mack Bond, Jesse Bilbo, Cornelius Seal, Forest Lee, Albert Prince, Luther Burge, Quitman Perry, Clyde Megehee, Charlie Daughdrill, Hubert Mitchell, John R. Walters, Herbert Lee, Fred Spiers, Wilson Prince, Jewell Lee Prince, Guy Penton, Lawson Lee, David Baker, Hugh Lee, Grady Lee, Labron Lee, L. O. Marshall, Morris Mitchell, J. Albert Mitchell, Foster Smith, Elmer Landrum, C. B. Bales, Lester Burge, Norman Stockstill, Earl Smith, Wiley Rester, C. D. Crocker, Willie J. Downes, Ben Broome, A. L. Cassanova, Claiborne Bounds, Horace Smith, Sr., J. S. Dedeaux, George Mitchell, Arnold Parker, Andrew Lee, Dan M. Hillman, Alvern McCardle, Jerome Whipple, Cecil Laird, Harvey Mitchell, Joel Ladner and Donald Windham.

LOCAL MISSION PROJECTS

The following churches were established as associational mission projects under the labors and leadership of Hobolochitto Association local missionaries since the early 1940's: Old Spanish Trail, Waveland; Cedar Drive, Pearlington; Zion, Gainesville; Macedonia, east of Poplarville; Hickory Grove, Lumberton; Bienville, east of Picayune; College Heights, Poplarville; Westlawn, Picayune; Central, Bay St. Louis; Temple, Bogalusa; Calvary, Purvis; and Parkview, Gautier.

A number of other churches were established through the missions efforts of local churches with soul-winning and missions-minded pastors.

JOHN W. MILLER

Eld. John W. Miller was an ardent soulwinner, a lover of God's Word and a missionary at heart. He and his wife had several children before he was ever saved. He surrendered to preach the gospel when he was about 39 years old, and lived to be very active in his calling for some 30 years. He was native to the Hancock-Pearl River County area. Spent much of his life in Bogalusa, Louisiana, where he was converted to Christ and began his public ministry. Along with Eld. Ernest E. Seal and others, he was instrumental in organizing the Terrace Baptist Church in that city.

He had very little formal education. He once told the author that he only went to the "third grade." He spent much of his life as a young man as a wrestler in a carnival owned by his father. He was not an extremely large man, but he was a powerful man physically.

He applied himself with great diligence in searching the scriptures. He mastered the art of reading sufficiently to make a clear and distinct presentation of his message. He always prayed much and "trusted God" for his messages.

John Miller was born January 22, 1900. He died in Mobile, Alabama, February 24, 1970, after suffering many years with rheumatoid Arthritis.

He was a dynamic preacher. He baptized many converts. I have seen the river banks almost covered with converts waiting to follow Christ in baptism. In most of his early years in the ministry he did most of his pastoring and mission work with little if any financial support.

He established the missions and led in organizing Old Spanish Trail Church at Waveland; Cedar Drive in Pearlington; Hickory Grove near Lumberton; Zion, Gainesville; and Macedonia, east of Poplarville, while associational missionary for the churches of the Hobolochitto Association. He was interstate missionary for the churches of the B.M.A. of America from 1949 until his health failed him in 1956 while doing mission work in Atlanta, Georgia. As interstate missionary he was primarily instrumental in establishing Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Chickasaw, Alabama; Rigby Street Church in Montgomery Alabama; and Eastside Church in Sheffield, Alabama. All these are strong churches today.

Admittedly, he never remained with a church to see it reach great dimensions in its development. He always left this assignment to others. But he always left a nucleus well established in the Biblical doctrines and a mind to work. He was a master in difficult missions situations. Part of his success can be attributed to a dogged determination. He was not a quitter.

He loved the churches, pastors and people of the old Hobolochitto Association. With many others, we'll look to see him in the rapture!



Charlie L. Lee

ELDER CHARLIE L. LEE, a great pastor and expounder of the scriptures, was a leader among the churches of the old Hobolochitto Baptist Association. He was born June 12, 1898. He finished his work, and went to be with his Lord May 4, 1971. He was moderator of the Hobolochitto Association seven times - 1950, '51, '52, '55, '56, '61 and '62. He pastored the following churches in Mississippi: Wolf Creek, Catahoula, Lee's Chapel #1, McHenry, Midway, Fairhope, Beaumont; Zion Rest, Sycamore and Mt. Carmel.

He enjoyed a great sense of humor. He enjoyed life, his family, and his friends.



August Holden - 1902-1968

ELDER AUGUST HOLDEN, faithful minister among the churches of the Hobolochitto Association and the Mississippi State Association (B.M.A. of Mississippi), was clerk of the Hobolochitto fifteen times from 1944 to 1961. He served as clerk longer than anyone in the history of the Association. He served the churches of the Hobolochitto as local missionary for many years. He was also state missionary for the State Association of Mississippi three or four years.

Brother Holden was born in Hancock County August 30, 1902. He grew up in the area of old Napolean-Westonia communities. After finishing high school he attended Pearl River County A.H.S. (Agriculture High School), now Pearl River Junior College in Poplarville, where he was a star football player for four years. While attending school at Poplarville he heard Evangelist Howard S. Williams preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in a tent revival campaign. He was converted during this soul-stirring revival along with a large number of others, several of whom were also members of the football team. Brother Holden and three others later surrendered to the ministry.

Brother Holden taught in the public schools of Pearl River and Hancock Counties for eighteen years. He loved children. He and his good wife, the former Eugenia Kennedy, had lots of children in their home.

He was ordained to the work of the gospel ministry at Cedar Grove Baptist Church at Nicholson. Churches he pastored included Old Spanish Trail at Waveland; Cedar Point in Bay St. Louis; Mill Creek near Picayune; Cedar Drive (formerly Spring Branch) at Pearlington; Wolf Creek and at Poplarville. His seeming rugged personality caused him to appear to those who did not know him as some of us did, to be a bit gruff or harsh, but few men possessed a Christian heart of such love and tenderness. When he preached, it was profoundly explicit and gun-barrell straight. He was absolutely uncompromising in his convictions. August Holden was nobody's "boy," but he was every wit God's man!

The Lord called him from earth's labors to heaven's refreshment June 4, 1968. His memorial services was attended by a large host of fellow ministers and other friends from a wide area. The services were conducted from Cedar Drive Baptist Church in Pearlington. His remains were laid to rest in old Turtleskin Cemetery near the west gate of what is now the National Space and Technology Laboratories.



Joe Harris - 1909-1969

Eld Joe Harris, grand-son of the late Thaddeus B. Mitchell, pioneer south Mississippi preacher, was born in Pearl River County, Mississippi, December 12, 1909. He lived most of his early life in the Picayune and Bogalusa areas. He was converted to Christ under the preaching of Eld. J. M. Stuart when about 30 years old. After his baptism he soon became a useful and gifted Bible teacher in the Terrace Baptist Church in Bogalusa, Louisiana. He was licensed to preach by the Terrace Church in mid August, 1941, and later ordained to the full work of the gospel ministry by Terrace Church February 26, 1942.

Eld. J. W. Thomas preached the ordination sermon. Eld. S. C. Hammock did the interrogation; Eld. G. H. Byrd gave the charge to Bro. Harris; Eld. J. M. Stuart charged the church; and Eld. G. V. Hamilton led the prayer at the laying-on-of-hands by the presbytery. Others in the ordaining presbytery included J. E. Moore, J. W. Pope, W. E. Godshaw, W. R. Allen, C. P. Toney, L. S. Walker, J. W. Sones, E. E. Seal and deacon Hester Davenport.

Churches pastored included Cedar Grove, Nicholson; Mt. Carmel, Carriere; Sycamore, Picayune; Hickory Grove, Lumberton; Mill Creek, Picayune; Canaan, Franklinton, La.; Washington, Neely; Goodhope, Columbia; Sprinhill, Laurel; and Boguefala, Mooreville. He pastored Sycamore and Mill Creek twice. He is the only man ever to pastor at Mill Creek twice.

Possessing a meek personality, reserve in his demeanor, he was loved and esteemed by those who knew him and labored with him. He had a special love in his heart for the work of old-line Association or Landmark Baptist. He studied the Bible diligently and exhaustively. He was therefore considered an extremely well informed man - a scholar in his own right in the doctrines of Eschatology.

On December 1, 1969 he went to be with the Lord and Saviour he witnessed to for some 28 years. Memorial services were conducted from the sanctuary of the Springhill Baptist Church in Jones County, with burial in the church cemetery. The service was attended by a very large gathering of ministers and other friends from several states.

CHAPTER XVIII

WITNESSING, WAITING, WATCHING

The churches of the old Hobolochitto Association, like New Testament churches elsewhere, have patiently labored under the awesome responsibility incumbent upon those who are the exclusive witnessess of Jesus Christ to all the world. As the sunset of the age approaches, they wait with joyful anticipation, and watch with assurance for His coming in power and great glory. We believe His coming is imminent. We do not know the day. But we do know He is coming! Therefore, we watch, wait and witness!

"And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" - Acts 1:8.

Such Divine responsibilities incumbent upon the churches demands that we be bonded together in love, and continue in the unity of the Spirit, as "laborers together with God."

Sycamore Church in northeast Picayune was host to the 113th annual session of the Association October 2, 1969. Eighteen churches were represented. Host pastor Lonnie Howell extended a warm welcome to the messengers and visitors. The minutes of the 1969 session note that "Bro. L. S. Walker brought the message (11:00 a.m.) from John 7:46." His subject was, "Never man spake like this man."

Officers elected were L. S. Walker, moderator; Travis E. Moore, clerk; and Walter E. Godshaw, treasurer.

The moderator recognized the following visiting pastors, denominational leaders and others: A. M. Wilson, A. W. Kirkland, Arthur Smith, B. H. Stringer, G. H. Gordon, G. W. Pierce and George C. Stockstill. Local associational missionary Harry Burge gave his annual report on the progress of the new church in Ozona.

The eighteen churches reported 131 baptisms and 104 additions to the churches by "letters" - a total of 274 additions for the year.

The 114th annual session was convened with Lee's Chapel #2 Church at Leetown October 2, 1970, with twenty churches represented. This was an increase of two over the previous year. Petitionary letters were called for and read. The following churches were welcomed into the fellowship of the Association: First Missionary (now Cedar Drive) Baptist, Pearlington; Temple Baptist, Bogalusa; and Oak Grove, one of the old churches returning from the Ten Mile Association.

The same officers as the previous year were elected for another year. Brother Travis Earl Moore, pastor of Community Baptist Church, brought the morning worship hour message on the subject: "The Sins of the Saints." He read from II Sam. 11:27 and 12:14. After the message, Bro. A. R. Reddin was asked to extend the right hand of appreciation to Bro. Moore on behalf of the congregation for the great message.

A large photo of Mrs. Lela Lee appeared in the Minutes of 1970 by vote of the Association. Sister Lee was born September 25, 1904. She died August 10, 1970. She was voted special recognition for her dedication and outstanding service in the W.M.A. work of Lee's Chapel #1, her home church, and in the Association.

Hosting the annual sessions for next seven years was: Westlawn, Picayune, September 25, 1971. L. S. Walker, moderator; David E. Steele, clerk; and Walter E. Godshaw, treasurer. Pastor David E. Steele brought the annual message.

Temple Church in Bogalusa, September 23, 1972. J. E. Moore, Sr., moderator; L. D. Whitfield, clerk; and Walter E. Godshaw, treasurer. Pastor Jewell Lee Prince brought the annual message.



THE AUTHOR IN OLD JERUSALEM

In the upper photo showing the Dome of the Rock, or Mosque of Omar (Moslem Temple) on the ancient site of King Solomon's Temple in old Jerusalem in the back ground, is the author and a group of friends while touring the Holy Land in January, 1972. Far left, third row from bottom, is the author. Far left, fourth row is seen Pastor Wm. Gary Smith, First Baptist Church of Carriere, Mississippi. Next to him is Miss Judy Beth Terrell, Poplarville, Mississippi. Far left, back row is Pastor James Smith of Pine Grove Baptist Church west of Picayune, Mississippi.

In lower photo the author is seen walking along a street in old Jerusalem.

Mill Creek Church, Picayune, hosted the 1973 annual session on September 22nd. Eld. Ocie Crowe, pastor of Henleyfield First Baptist Church, was chosen moderator. Eld. L. D. Whitfield, pastor at Wolf Creek, clerk; and Brother Godshaw again elected treasurer. Eld. J. W. Pope, pastor of Temple Baptist Church in Bogalusa, brought the annual message while a large gathering for the meeting listened with rapt attention to the powerful preaching of Brother Pope, considered one of the best informed men among Baptists in his day.

Old Oak Grove Church in the Silver Run community east of Poplarville, organized in 1871, entertained the annual session again on September 21, 1974, Officers elected same as year before. Eld. Ameal Spiers, Jr., pastor at Cedar Drive Church in Pearlington, brought the message at eleven o'clock.

Benville Church in old Bienville community east of Picayune hosted the next annual session on September 27, 1975. The author, prior to June, 1975, was for near seven years pastor of Mill Creek Church, having later served as interim pastor at Mt. Calvary, and then Westside at Hattiesburg, was chosen moderator again. Eld. L. D. Whitfield, clerk; and Eld. Walter Godshaw, treasurer. Eld. James D. Bliss was the speaker for the introductory message.

The messengers of the churches gathered with Mill Creek Church again on September 25th for the 1976 annual session. Brother Kenneth W. Flynt, pastor of Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Picayune was elected moderator. Brother Winfred Baker, clerk; and Brother C. J. Lee, son of the late Eld. Charlie Lee, was elected treasurer. Brother Richard Smith, beloved pastor of Antioch Church was the introductory message speaker.

First Baptist Church at Henleyfield, constituted in 1874, hosted the Hobolochitto annual session again September 24, 1977. Eld. Harry Burge was chosen by the messengers as moderator. He became the 29th man to be honored since 1856 in the position as moderator of the Hobolochitto Association. Eld. L. D. Whitfield was again elected clerk; and Bro. C. J. Lee, treasurer. Brother John Elbert Moore, Sr., for some 25 years (on two occasions) pastor of the Lee's Chapel Church at Leetown, brought the annual message at the designated hour of worship.

Eld. Travis E. Moore, a graduate of Southeastern Baptist College, and former pastor of Community Baptist Church at Barth, was elected associational missionary to work with the Cedar Point Mission in Bay St. Louis. Brother Travis Moore and his brother Doyle Moore, both sons of Eld. and Mrs. John E. Moore, Sr., and their families are now missionaries to the Philippine Islands.

The 1971 minutes also noted that Eld. Don Cunningham was

elected to work on the campus at Pearl River Junior College at Poplarville.

Brother Charlie Alexander had worked with the Bay St. Louis (Cedar Point) Mission in 1969 and into 1970. He and his son, Willie, with some other help, restored the building after damage done by Hurricane Camille. Brother Alexander worked without pay from the Association.

The minutes show there were 22 churches represented at the annual sessions of 1971 and 1972. Garden Grove in Bucks Branch was received on petition in 1972. Howard Miley was pastor. There were 22 churches again represented for the 1973 session, the minutes note.

The minutes of the 1974 session show 27 churches represented. Eld. Woodrow Byrd was serving as associational missionary with the Bayview Baptist Church (formerly Cedar Point) in Bay St. Louis. Other new churches received into the Association were Bible Way, Derby; St. John Street, Bogalusa; and Southside Baptist in Pontchatoula, Louisiana. Eld. Charlie Alexander was pastor at Southside.

The Minutes show 29 churches represented in 1975 at Bienville. New Hope, Cross Roads, B. A. Nolan, pastor, represented again. Arthur Smith, who had, in previous years, served as associational missionary for the churches of the Hobolochitto in conjunction with the State Association, to establish the Parkview Baptist Church in Gautier, was now working as local associational missionary in Purvis where he led in establishing the Calvary Baptist Church there. Calvary petitioned the body for working fellowship in the 1975 annual session.

The churches constituting of the Hobolochitto Association, as well as individual churches at times, have often taken firm stands on certain moral issues in the community and the nation. One example is noted in the minutes of 1973.

“WHEREAS, The Picayune Item in its Sunday Edition carries a Church Page which features one of the churches of this area; and

“WHEREAS, This page is sponsored by a number of business establishments, several of which sell alcoholic beverages; and

“WHEREAS, All strong drink is condemned in the Holy Scriptures; and its consumption, sale and production clearly violates the Church Covenant; and

“WHEREAS, It is extremely inconsistent, if not hypocritical, to accept the sponsorship of such places of business which deal in alcoholic beverages, while at the same time opposing the sale, production and consumption of such beverages from our pulpit;

“Therefore, Be It Resolved, That we, the Messengers of the Churches of the Hobolochitto Baptist Association, in annual session this 22nd day of September, 1973, urge our people to refrain from per-

mitting their Churches to be featured in such a Church Page so long as it is sponsored by places of business which deal in the sale of beer or other alcoholic beverages."

Ocie L. Crowe, Moderator
L. D. Whitfield, Clerk

There were 27 churches represented at Mill Creek for the 1976 annual session. Brother Arthur Smith made his last report and resigned as associational missionary to become pastor of the Calvary Church in Purvis. Brother L. R. Lewis, Jr., a native of northeast Mississippi, then pastoring in Arizona, accepted the position as local association missionary, and later moved on the field to work with the Bayview (now Central) Baptist Church in Bay St. Louis. The author worked with the Bay St. Louis work, as he had done on prior occasions, until Brother Lewis and his family came to the field. Brother Lewis, now pastor of River Bend Baptist Church in Violet, Louisiana, did a very good work in Bay St. Louis. Brother John T. Loden succeeded him as associational missionary there.

PRISONERS BIBLE CRUSADE ENDORSED

The following recommendation for support of Prisoners Bible Crusade was noted on page 23 of the Minutes of the 1976 annual session of the Association:

Whereas, the Prisoners Bible Crusade was founded in May, 1973, for the purpose of getting Bibles into the hands of prison inmates throughout the United States; and

Whereas, this organization has the approval of one of our churches; and

Whereas, since its beginning only three years ago, despite insufficient financial support, some Twenty-Six Thousand (26,000) King James Version Bibles have been given to men and women in various penal institutions in some 23 states where the Crusade is presently working; and

"Whereas, according to reports from prison chaplains, individual inmates and other sources, we believe there have been as many as One Thousand (1,000) souls who professed Jesus Christ as their Saviour; and

"Whereas, our churches have no such program for the distribution of Bibles inside prison walls or outside of them;

"Be It Therefore Resolved: That we the messengers of the churches in annual session this 25th day of September, 1976, recommend to our churches everywhere to give their prayerful and financial support to this needy work.

"All checks should be made to Prisoners Bible Crusade, Inc. The

mailing address is Prisoners Bible Crusade, Inc., P. O. Box 696, Picayune, MS 39466."

Prisoners Bible Crusade is a world-wide ministry to prison inmates. The ministry of Prisoners Bible Crusade has given more than fifty thousand (50,000) Bibles to inmates in 35 states and two foreign countries at the time of this writing. It has been a very effective ministry.

The Board of Directors since its beginning is composed of the following: Mr. Chester C. Lee, chairman; Pastors L. S. Walker, vice chairman; Paul E. Lee, Treasurer; John E. Moore and B. H. Stringer. Pastor George C. Stockstill has recently been appointed national field director.

Ministers listed in the Minutes of the Association from 1971 to 1977 are: David E. Steele, Obie Johnson, Jewell Lee Prince, Frank Selph, Don E. Cunningham, George Jones, J. C. Tynes, L. S. Walker, Harold D. Smith, James Royce Perry, Mardice Mitchell, L. C. Burge, Travis E. Moore, Johnny B. Ladner, Clyde Pitts, John E. Moore, Sr., L. D. Whitfield, A. V. Stockstill, Wiley Madden, Charlie Alexander, J. W. Pope, Wesley Downes, J. O. Cuevas, Ralph A. Brand, Thomas Welborn, Jr., Tevis Ladner, Robert Bullock, W. E. Greenwood, Arlon Johnson, Vardaman Spiers, J. D. Miller, Vert Ladner, J. O. Martin, H. K. Stockstill, Joe A. Wright, James C. Lee, Ameal Spiers, Jr., Howard Miley, Clyde Page, Buford C. Smith, Herman Seal, Wendell Wilkie Green, L. C. Cuevas, Ocie Crowe, Ray Beall, Woodrow W. Byrd, James D. Bliss, Delos E. Husser, Gerald Williams, Arthur Smith, Jack Lloyd, C. N. Daughdrill, Zack Lee, Charles Bartley, Roger N. Hobson, Richard Smith, Alton Lumpkin, Paul E. Lee, Tom Dibord, B. A. Nolan, D. J. Price, Z. T. Rankin, Arthur Shaw, Winfred Baker, B. H. Stringer, Kenneth W. Flynt, John Bullock, Harry Burge, Sammy Prince, B. C. Kelly, L. R. Lewis, Jr., Elvert Necaise, George C. Stockstill, Billy C. Ferrell, Vernon Courtney, Dasson Lavelle Lee and Eddie Furby.

Six of those listed have since gone to be with the Lord. Twenty-four had moved on to other fields of labor in the Lord's vineyard. Several having suffered from failing health have had to limit their activities. While others, sad to say, have never been very active in the work of the ministry.

The churches of the old Hobolochitto Association, like Baptists have historically, hold that the gospel ministry is a Divine calling.



WALKER, MOORE AND WHITFIELD AT 1972 SESSION

Pictured above is the author, out-going moderator, presenting olive wood gavel made near Jerusalem, Israel, to in-coming moderator, John E. Moore, Sr., at the 116th annual session of the Hobolochitto Baptist Association at Temple Baptist Church in Bogalusa, Louisiana, September 23, 1972. Seated at desk is Lamont D. Whitfield, clerk.

Benville Baptist Church in Bienville community east of Picayune was host to the One Hundred and Twenty-Second Annual Session of the Hobolochitto Association September 23, 1978 with 27 churches represented by letters and messengers.

The meeting was called to order by the moderator. Eld. G. C. Stockstill led as the congregation sang "Love Lifted Me," with Eld. L.

D. Whitfield at the piano. Eld. Roger N. Hobson led the opening prayer. The congregation continued to sing "To The Work," after which Eld. John E. Moore brought an inspiring devotional message. Eld. Kenneth Flynt led in prayer.

Several committees were appointed and approved by the messengers prior to the election of officers. Eld. Harry Burge was elected moderator; Eld. L. D. Whitfield, clerk; and Bro. C. J. Lee, treasurer.

The following visitors were recognized and welcomed: Don J. Brown, Gautier, Editor of the Mississippi Baptist, official journal of the Churches of the Baptist Missionary Association of Mississippi; Eugene Murphy, President of Southeastern Baptist College, Laurel; and Arnold Knight, Laurel, State Missions Secretary-Treasurer.

CHURCHES AND PASTORS IN 1979

A few random notes on the organization and history of the churches which presently constitute the Hobolochitto Baptist Association, along with names and notes about their present pastors:

ANTIOCH, Picayune, was organized in 1945. Steve Smith, a native of Chickasaw, Alabama, and a student at Southeastern Baptist College in Laurel, is the present pastor.

BENVILLE, east of Picayune, was organized in 1944. Jewell Lee Prince is presently pastoring the church in the Bienville community.

CATAHOULA, in the Catahoula community on highway 43 east of Picayune was organized as a New Testament church in 1941. John Bullock is the pastor.

CEDAR DRIVE, Pearlington, was constituted in 1942 in the old Napoleon-Spring Branch community as a result of a mission sponsored by the churches of the Hobolochitto Association. Bro. Charlie Alexander, pastor, known and esteemed for his zeal and devotion, was ordained by the Westlawn Baptist Church July 27, 1969.

CENTRAL, Bay St. Louis, was organized in 1974, after two previous attempts to establish the church over the past thirty years had failed; although many souls were saved as a result of these mission labors. Central is a mission project of the Hobolochitto Association in conjunction with the Baptist Missionary Association of Mississippi. John T. Loden is the present missionary-pastor.

CENTRAL, Bogalusa, organized about 1973. L. S. Walker is presently serving as interim missionary-pastor.

CENTRAL, Slidell, constituted from a mission sponsored by the churches of the Baptist Missionary Association of Louisiana in 1964. Joe Langley is presently pastoring the growing church on Robert Road.

COLLEGE HEIGHTS, Poplarville, established February 9, 1962, with 24 charter members under the leadership of Eld. Howard Rhoden, local missionary for the churches of the Hobolochitto Association. Two prior attempts to establish an Association Baptist church in Poplarville had failed when those congregations were dissolved.

The organizing council was composed of "17 pastors and 10 deacons." Pastor Kenneth W. Flynt was chosen moderator for the council; P. M. Cochran, clerk; J. E. Moore read the Articles of Faith; Vern D. Holifield, read the Church Covenant; and L. S. Walker led in prayer. Dr. Ralph A. Brand bought the message from God's Word.

Howard Rhoden was elected by the new church as missionary-pastor. Other pastors in order are Ralph A. Brand, Joe Wright, Gerald Williams and Henry C. Phelps, present pastor.

Brother Phelps was ordained to the full work of the ministry by the Peninsula Baptist Church, Hampton, Virginia, May 24, 1970. The late Eld. John I. Jeffcoat was pastor of the Peninsula Baptist Church.

COMMUNITY, in old Barth community in east Pearl River County, was constituted as a New Testament church in 1945. Eld. Harold D. Smith is now pastoring this happy church.

DERBY PLACE, Derby, was organized by "an arm extended" by the Westlawn Baptist Church in 1974. Eld. James Curtis Lee is presently pastoring the Derby church.

FIRST BAPTIST OF HENLEYFIELD, organized in 1874. Eld. B. A. Nolan is pastor.

HICKORY GROVE, east of Lumberton, organized from a mission work of the Hobolochitto Baptist Association in 1943. Eld. J. C. Pitts is pastor.

LEE'S CHAPEL #1, constituted in 1922. Eld. Harry Burge, presently moderator of the Hobolochitto Association is the pastor. This is one of the fastest growing churches in the Association at this time.

LEE'S CHAPEL #2, Leetown community, organized January 15, 1928, with 41 charter members. A history of the growing church list the following as charter members: Mary Jane Lee, Rufus Lee, Jesse Stockstill, Myrtie Maye Smith, Lauvener Smith, Richmond C. Smith, Labron Lee, Zack Lee, Payton L. Lee, Thomas F. Lee, L. L. Lee, Jr., Mrs. Elizabeth Lee, Payton W. Lee, Mrs. Virginia V. Lee, Alex Lee, Hugh Lee, Harbert Lee, Mrs. Stella Lee, Heber Lee, Mrs. Louella Smith, Leonard J. Lee, Ford Smith, Mrs. Maggie Lee, Thomas W. Lee, Mrs. Dorothy Lee, Charlie L. Lee, Mrs. Ruth Lee, Mrs. Rosa Stockstill, Roger S. Lee, Mrs. Elsie Lee, Virgil Lee, Mrs. Lourenie Lee, Woodroe Lee, Clifton Lee, Marvis Lee, DUCIE Lee, Mrs. Emma Smith and Culbert Lee.

The organization council was composed of Pastors L. G. Varnado,

J. E. Sherril, George L. Stockstill and B. S. Penton.

Richmond C. Smith was the first church clerk. First deacons ordained by the church were Thomas F. Lee, Payton L. Lee, Thomas W. Lee, Charlie L. Lee and Labron Lee.

Dasson Lavelle Lee is presently pastor at Leetown.

MILL CREEK, Highway 43, east of Picayune, was organized November 23, 1909, at the old home place of the late Eld. Hardy Smith on Mill Creek. Eld. John Elbert Moore, Sr., moderator of the Hobolochitto Association seven times; pastor of Lee's Chapel at Leetown some 25 years, is the present pastor at Mill Creek.

MT. CALVARY, Picayune, was organized October 6, 1941, with 19 charter members. It is now the largest church in membership in the Hobolochitto Association. Eld. Kenneth W. Flynt, a native son of Mississippi, graduate of the Baptist Missionary Association Seminary at Jacksonville, Texas, and gifted pastor, is now for the second time pastoring this rapidly growing church.

MT. CARMEL, on Hillcrest Road east of Carriere, was constituted a New Testament Church June 5, 1945, with the following ten charter members: Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Courtney, Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Mitchell, Mr. and Mrs. Ernest Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Hollis Mitchell and Mr. and Mrs. Harvey Mitchell. It was organized in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Courtney. Pastors have been Charlie L. Lee, Joe Harris, H. K. Stockstill, L. C. Burge, Webber Jarrell, Delos E. Husser, W. E. Greenwood, V. L. Crawley, Ozel Martin, and W. E. Greenwood for his second time is pastor of the church.

NEW BETHEL, west of Derby, was organized in 1947. Eld. George C. Stockstill, a native son of Pearl River County, is the present pastor.

Brother Stockstill was born March 19, 1916, the son of Everett Monroe and Carrie D. (Mitchell) Stockstill. He is married to the former Jennie Vera Davis. After his conversion he was baptized into the fellowship of Sycamore Baptist Church, where he later surrendered to the call of God to preach the gospel, was subsequently licensed, and later ordained to the full work of the ministry on February 26, 1944.

George C. "Red" Stockstill saw action in the Philippine Islands in World War II after he was ordained to the ministry. He was seriously wounded in action on January 24, 1945. A Japanese rifle bullet penetrated his chest, passed through his lung, but missed his heart. The Lord preserved his life and brought him back to do a work for him. He was discharged from the Army October 25, 1945.

Upon his return home, he entered Pearl River Junior College at Poplarville while doing pastoral work in Pearl River County churches. He later moved to Jackson and graduated from Mississippi College at Clinton. He pastored the following churches: Lee's Chapel #2, Antioch, Behtlehem, Community, Creston Hills, Calvary, and now New

Bethel, Lee's Chapel, Antioch, Bethlehem and Community are all in the Hobolochitto Association. Creston Hills is in Jackson; and the Calvary church was established under Brother Stockstill's leadership while serving as interstate missionary in Ocean Springs.

He served as promotional and public relations director for Southeastern Baptist College for some time prior to 1957. He was president of the college from 1957 to 1961.

NEW HOPE, at Cross Roads was organized about 1944. Eld. Howard Miley is presently pastoring the church.

OAK GROVE, in the Silver Run community east of Poplarville, was constituted in 1871. Eld. James Royce Perry is the pastor at this time.

OLD SPANISH TRAIL, Highway 90, west, Waveland, was organized through the mission efforts of the Hobolochitto Association October 14, 1942. Charter members are Mr. and Mrs. George Tommie Spiers, Mr. and Mrs. John Asher, and Mrs. Mary Kenmar.

The church was organized in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Shubert. The organizing council included Elders John W. Miller, Kenneth T. McKenzie, L. S. Walker and August Holden. The first small house of worship was placed on a lot which did not belong to the church. The building and all its contents were completely destroyed in a hurricane in September, 1947, while the author was pastoring the little flock. After holding services for some time among the homes again, a lot was purchased and a new and better building erected. The church now has a third and much better house of worship free of debt.

Pastors include L. S. Walker, August Holden, Jimmie Lee, Vert Ladner, William C. Mitchell, Tommie Spiers, D. J. Price, H. K. Stockstill, Lamar Breland, Curtis Daniels, Simon Stockstill, H. O. Sullivan, Russell Beech, C. N. Daughdrill, Jewell Lee Prince, Sammy Prince, L. S. Walker and Vernon Courtney.

RIVER BEND, Violet, Louisiana, was organized in 1959. Eld. L. R. Lewis, Jr. is presently pastoring the church.

SHILOH, Necaise Crossing, was organized in 1945. Eld. Elvert Necaise is pastoring at this time.

SYCAMORE, Picayune, was established in 1912. Billy C. Ferrell is the present pastor. Brother Ferrell was ordained to the work of the ministry by the Vardamon Street Baptist Church in Wiggins February 28, 1971. He has since pastored at East Main Street Baptist Church in Lumberton, Cypress Creek in Perry County, and now Sycamore.

TEMPLE, Bogalusa, was organized from a mission established by the associational missionary of the Hobolochitto Association. It was constituted into a New Testament Church in 1968. The churches of the Baptist Missionary Association of Louisiana also assisted in establishing the church. Eld. J. W. Pope is pastor of the church.

WESTLAWN, Picayune, organized as a Hobolochitto Association mission project under the leadership of associational missionary Leo Lee in December, 1964. Eld. Roger N. Hobson is now pastoring the church.

WOLF CREEK, in northwest Hancock County, was organized in 1907. Eld. L. D. Whitfield has pastored the church for the past five years.

Brother Whitfield was ordained by the Mill Creek Baptist Church on August 17, 1947. He served one year as moderator of the Hobolochitto Association. He has been clerk of the Association seven times. He is the present clerk.

PLAINVIEW, east of Poplarville, was organized in 1970. It cooperates in the work of the Ten Mile Baptist Association. Brother Russell Beech is the pastor.



Pictured above is Eld. Curtis H. Mitchell standing in front of the old Mt. Calvary Baptist Church building in Picayune in 1942. He served this church as a Bible teacher, song leader and a deacon before he surrendered to preach, and was ordained by the church October 23, 1943.

A grandson of the late Thad. B. Mitchell, a pioneer preacher in old Hancock and Pearl River Counties, Brother Mitchell was born July 28, 1907. He grew up along Pearl River on both the Louisiana and Mississippi sides in the Picayune area.

After pastoring at Hickory Grove near Lumberton and at James Street in Hattiesburg, he moved to Holden, in Livingston Parish, Louisiana, where the Lord used him to do a monumental work. He led in establishing five strong churches in that general area - St. James Baptist Church near Holden; Plainview Church south of Walker; Shady Grove near Amite; Seven Oaks at Watson; and Southside in Pontchoula.



WHERE HURRICANE STRUCK

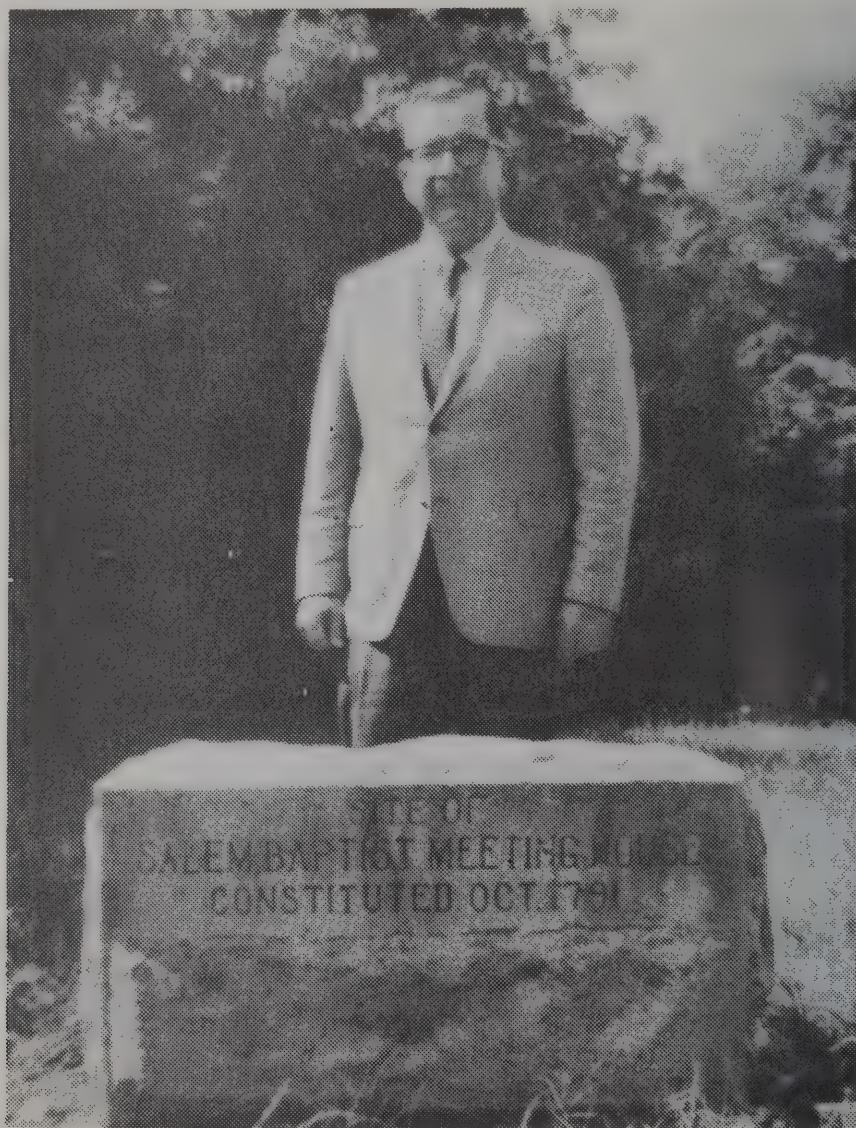
Pictured above (upper) is storm-flattened Westlawn Baptist Church auditorium in Picayune; and (lower) what remained of the new church plant of Lee's Chapel Church at Leetown after Hurricane Camille struck on the night of August 17, 1969.

Both buildings were under construction and nearing completion when disaster struck. Many church buildings, schools, homes and other buildings in Hancock and Pearl River Counties were destroyed or appreciably damaged. Many lives were lost along the Gulf Coast, but no one was killed or seriously hurt among the families or in the im-

mediate areas of the Hobolochitto Association churches.

People rallied everywhere to assist their neighbors, though they needed help themselves.

In the words and spirit of the prophet Isaiah, "They helped every one his neighbor; and every one said to his brother, Be of good courage" - Isaiah 41:6



**"SITE OF
SALEM BAPTIST MEETING HOUSE
CONSTITUTED OCT. 1791"**

The author stands back of the granite memorial marker which marks the site of the rustic log meeting house of old Salem Church in Jefferson County, constituted in October, 1791. Salem was the first Baptist church established in the Mississippi Territory. Here the old Mississippi Baptist Association was organized in 1806.



PRESIDENT RAY THORNTON RECEIVES GAVEL

Ray Thornton, president of the Baptist Missionary Association of Mississippi (formerly Mississippi Baptist Association), on the left above, is about to receive the gavel now in use by the B.M.A. of Mississippi, from the author, right, at the 1971 annual session at Southeastern Baptist College in Laurel. The gavel was special made from a hickory tree standing on the site of the first meeting house of old Salem Baptist Church, constituted in 1791, first Baptist church in Mississippi.

GOING NOWHERE TOO FAST

I am reminded of what I once heard a man say about some people getting in too big a hurry. "The hurrier we go," he said, "the behinder we get!"

Too many of the Lord's people have surrounded themselves with modern conveniences, and joined the "rat race." It seems the more conveniences we have to expedite our work, the less time we have or care to give to the Lord's work. From the founding of the Hobolochitto Association in 1856 until about 1940 the annual sessions of the Association lasted three days. After about 1940 the time for the session was reduced from three down to two days. This arrangement

lasted until about 1956 when folks got in a hurry, or either just did not consider what they were doing important, and jammed it all into one day . . . and that does not even include an evening service which we also dropped. This tells us something about our spiritual deterioration and moral decline in America if we only cared to listen. Time for ourselves in mad persuit of worldly satisfactions, but not time for the work of God! How tragic! We are indeed in too much of a hurry! Some who may care, don't know; others who may know, don't care!

ALL THE STORY NOT TOLD

It is the sincere hope of the author that the readers have read this volume with pleasure and profit. We make no claim to have told all the eventful story of the Baptists in this area. As a matter of fact, the author holds several files of un-used materials the results of years of research not included in this historical sketch. Maybe someday, the Lord willing, these all may be part of a larger volume.

Just how many Baptist churches there are within a radius of only fifty miles from where Old Palestine, the first church, was established, would be difficult to determine. Suffice it to say, there are many! In Pearl River County and adjacent communities along its borders are some ninty Baptist churches representing seven or eight national, state or district working fellowships. There are 28 Hobolochitto Association churches also identified with the cooperative work of the Baptist Missionary Association of Mississippi and the Baptist Missionary Association of America; 32 Southern Baptist Convention churches in the Pearl River Baptist Association; eight "Faithway" Baptist churches; two American Baptist Association churches; three churches identified with "Fundamentalist" or "Independent" Baptists; and 17 Negro churches representing two different district Baptist Associations.

There are 72 Baptist churches in Pearl River County itself. Pearl River County being the geographical center historically of the activity and influence of the old Hobolochitto Baptist Association for the past 137 years since the first church was constituted in 1842. There are sixty white and 12 Negro Baptist churches in the county.

This all tells us somethings very interesting about the Baptists of this area: obviously, they have not always agreed on everything; they have freely exercised their freedom and autonomy as New Testament churches; and most of all, they have not been idle. The zeal of the Baptists has long been "a thorn in the side" of a world influenced by the powers of darkness. Soulwinning has held top priority. The fires of missions and evangelism have constantly burned brightly among these people of God. How interesting it would be to know how many souls have been won to Christ, and how many baptized into the

fellowship of the churches in this area and around the world through such a constant mission outreach.

The pioneer settlers of this area built their houses of worship as they built their homes and schools. They realized what we all should realize, that a community or a nation is never any better than its homes; its churches; and its schools. When these institutions are weakened or corrupted, the nation is corrupted.

It would be extremely difficult to accurately assess the impact and influence of these churches upon the spiritual, moral, social, cultural, economic and political fiber of this area and the nation.

MORE BAPTISTS IN MISSISSIPPI

The Hobolochitto Association is only one of twelve local or district Associations among the more than 200 churches which constitute the Baptist Missionary Association of Mississippi. There are many, many other Baptist churches in the great State of Mississippi representing several other larger and smaller cooperating fellowships. As a matter of fact, there are more Baptists and Baptist churhces in Mississippi than all other religions combined.

OLD CHURCHES

There are at least ten Baptist churches in Pearl River County known to be over one hundred years old. The oldest is Old Palestine which is 137 years old (1842-1979). Others are Union, Corinth, Juniper Grove, Zion Hill, Pine Grove, Oak Grove, First of Henleyfield, Bethel and Spring Hill. Byrd's Chapel Methodist is the only other church in the county known to be over one hundred years old.

OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN AND SERVE

The challenge of God's Word is to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" - II Peter 3:18. The churches of the Hobolochitto Association now have available to them numerous organizations which offer abundant opportunities for spiritual enrichment, exercise of talents, service, growth and development.

All the churches now have "full-time" services with good "Sunday Schools," most of which are graded and departmentalized. Most, if not all the churches have B.T.S. (Baptist Training Service) on Sunday evenings. Training Service emphasizes training for workers, stewardship and doctrinal instructions.

Most of the churches conduct regular Vacation Bible Schools for children and young people every summer.

Church-wide study courses are conducted by our churches from well-prepared, doctrinally sound materials made available through Baptist Publishing House in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Other organizations within the churches include W.M.A. (Woman's Missionary Auxiliary); Brotherhood for men; Galileans, an organization for fellowship, training and Christian service for boys; G.M.A. (Girl's Missionary Auxiliary); Y.L.A. (Young Ladies Auxiliary) for older young ladies; and Sunbeams for children, etc.

Most of these local church organizations are promoted through district, state and national organizations by the authority of churches represented by their duly elected messengers.

There are many more good publications available to the churches and their members than in times past. These include THE MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST, official publication of the churches of the BMA of Mississippi; THE GLEANER, a world missions magazine; PASTOR'S QUEST, for ministers and other church workers; FOCUS, a magazine published by the national WMA; GOLDEN WORDS, a monthly publications for Training Service, W.M.A., Brotherhood, G.M.A., Y.L.A. and Sunbeam workers.

WORLD MISSIONS OUTREACH

In addition to local associational, and state missions, the churches of the Hobolochitto Association cooperates in the interstate and foreign missions, education and benevolent work of the Baptist Missionary Association of America, with missionaries and mission stations across the United States and in twenty two foreign countries on six continents.

FOREIGN LANGUAGE LITERATURE

ELM (Enlarged Literature Ministry) of the Baptist Publishing House in Little Rock, Arkansas, now sponsors the publication of Sunday School, Training Service and other literature in several foreign languages for use on mission fields there.

HARVEST GLEANER HOUR

The Harvest Gleaner Hour is a radio missions outreach of the churches of the B.M.A. of America Radio and Television Department. This ministry reaches into most of the United States, Canada, Mexico, Central America, and parts of Africa, China and the Middle East.

BAPTIST MISSIONS HOUR

The churches of the Hobolochitto Association sponsors the Baptist Missions Hour radio broadcast over radio station WRJW, Picayune, every Sunday morning from 8:30 'till 9:00. This is the oldest program on the station. It was started by the author when pastor of Mt. Calvary Baptist Church when the station went on the air nearly 31 years ago.

The churches also sponsors radio services from time to time over stations in Poplarville, Bay St. Louis and Bogalusa.

SOUTHEASTERN BAPTIST COLLEGE

Southeastern Baptist College in Laurel, owned and operated by the churches of the B.M.A. of Mississippi receives strong support from the churches in the Hobolochitto Association. Many students from this area have attended the fine school.

BMA SEMINARY

The Baptist Missionary Association Seminary in Jacksonville, Texas, is another splendid institution supported by many of the churches in the Hobolochitto Association. There are no modernists or liberals on the faculty at Jacksonville. Let us hope there never will be.

CHILDREN'S HOME

The Mississippi Baptist Children's Home at Laurel has been home for a large number of children from the Pearl River and Hancock Counties area over the years past. The spacious home has provided good Christian environment, training and education for hundreds of boys and girls throughout Mississippi and other states. The home has always received very generous financial support from the churches of the Hobolochitto Baptist Association, and many other churches and individuals from the area.

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES

The churches of the Hobolochitto Baptist Association cooperate in the work of the state and national Baptist Music Fellowship; A.B.S (Association of Baptist Students) work on college campuses; Mississippi Baptist Commission on History; Minister's Benevolent Society; the local, state and national encampment and assembly programs - the national Baptist Assembly camp grounds at Gary, Texas; the five summer encampments sponsored by the BMA of Mississippi; and the Hobolochitto Encampment in July every year at Mandeville, Louisiana.

All these great programs involve spiritual enrichment, soulwinning, stewardship and Bible study.

WHAT DO WE BELIEVE?

As Baptists have historically, the churches of the Hobolochitto Baptist Association believe the Bible - all of it! Baptists have never acknowledged any creed but the Bible. They have never acknowledged any Head over the church but Jesus Christ; and no Administrator but the Holy Spirit.

These churches are regular, old-line, autonomous, cooperating missionary Baptist, as the churches of this historic Association have ever been. We strive to maintain a progressive orthodoxy. The churches are by their very nature conservative in theology. They may be characterized as strict Scriptural constructionists. They hold that the Bible, in its original languages, is the verbally inspired Word of God. It is therefore eternal and inerrant.

They are not "Primitive" or "Hardshell" Baptists. They are not "Free Will" Baptists, neither are they "Convention" Baptists. They are regular Missionary Baptists.

We believe in the Trinity of God: The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the same in essence, equal in power and glory.

We believe the Biblical account of creation. We believe that God is the Creator and Ruler of the Universe. Sovereign, Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omnipresent.

We believe that salvation is wholly by grace through faith without any admixture of works or human righteousness; that repentance and faith are the only prerequisites to salvation; that men are saved by the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ.

We believe the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary is the only acceptable sacrifice for sin; and his shed blood the only atonement for fallen man.

We believe the Bible teaches the hereditary and total depravity of man in his natural state involving his fall in Adam.

We also believe in the virgin birth and deity of Jesus Christ.

We believe in the eternal security of the believer in Christ.

We believe in the person and work of the Holy Spirit.

We believe the personality of Satan.

We believe in Christ's bodily resurrection and ascension back to the Father.

We believe in the doctrine of sanctification - that it begins in regeneration and is consummated in glorification.

We firmly believe that God's children should live separated lives from worldly lust and sinful indulgencies.

We believe in the reality of Heaven and Hell as taught in the Scriptures.

We believe in the personal, literal and visible pre-millennial second coming of Jesus Christ back to this earth to reign for a thousand years.

We believe the first New Testament church was established by Jesus Christ during His personal ministry on earth; and that it was a local autonomous body, Christ being its Founder, Foundation, Head and Lawgiver; and that He gave His Church a world-wide commission to preach the gospel to all the world.

We also believe in the perpetuity of New Testament (Baptist) churches from Christ's day on earth until His second coming.

We believe very strongly, as Baptists have historically held, in the principle of the separation of Church and State, and the absolute freedom of religion.

We believe that water baptism (immersion) is to be administered to believers only and in a scriptural church capacity.

We hold that the Lord's Supper, a church ordinance, is to be administered to baptized believers only and in a scriptural church capacity.

We believe in the right of scriptural churches to be held as equal units in their associational capacities. The Church being the scripturally authorized unit of representation, and not individuals. We believe in the principle of equal messenger representation regardless of number of members or financial status in the general associational meetings.

We believe in the subjection of all scriptural associational assemblies and their committees to the will of the churches; so that they will forever remain as servants of the churches originating them.

The churches of the Hobolochitto Baptist Association does not endorse the modern charismatic and ecumenical movements.

“LABOURERS TOGETHER WITH GOD: . . .”

These rambling observations and comments have noted, in a limited degree, a few things about some places and people we love in a very special way, and for some special reasons. We have talked about their loves and labors; their trials and triumphs - a group of God's people who lived much or all of their lives in a particular area familiar to some of us.

The Baptists, and some of other persuasions, of a greater part of south Mississippi and southeast Louisiana, had a common beginning in the area under the powerful preaching of one, and then two or three other pioneer preachers . . . and after a while seven or eight small frontier churches which formed a common bond for strength and achievement in what they chose to call the Hobolochitto Baptist Association. They found that there was great strength in unity. It was the beginning of a beautiful and fruitful relationship as “labourers

together with God."

Praying together and staying together, they fought many battles; made many mistakes; come to know something of both the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat. They lost some battles, but were sure of winning the war.

In their human foibles they perhaps erred in judgement; split, divided, and agreed to disagree; but there always remained a common bond in the Word of God; and most and best of all, the one Saviour and Lord Jesus Christ. This being true, all our failures notwithstanding, and they are legion, I close with a very strong feeling, that, under the blood-stained banner of our Lord and Saviour, we still march as "labourers together with God!" Amen!

ABOUT THE COVER

An artist conception of the first house of worship of Old Palestine Baptist Church near Nicholson in Pearl River County built about 1842 or 1843. Drawing is by E. James "Jim" Hoffman from a description given by several older members of the church who remembered how it looked.

HISTORICAL TABLE

Date	Place of Meeting	Moderator	Clerk	Preacher
1856	Old Palestine	W. H. Varnado	A. M. Slaydon	?
1857	Union	W. H. Varnado	A. M. Slaydon	W. H. Varnado
1858	Gainesville	W. H. Varnado	A. M. Slaydon	?
1859	Zion Hill	W. H. Varnado	A. M. Slaydon	A. M. Slaydon
1860	?	W. H. Varnado	A. M. Slaydon	T. B. Mitchell
1861	Old Palestine	W. H. Varnado	A. M. Slaydon	W. H. Varnado
1862	Union	W. H. Varnado	A. M. Slaydon	R. R. Breland
1863	Bethel	W. H. Varnado	A. M. Slaydon	A. M. Slaydon
1864	Union (La.)	Freeman Jones	W. F. Elliott	J. E. Pounds
1865	Mount Olive (La.)	W. H. Varnado	T. J. Simmons	J. C. Seale
1866	Pine Grove	W. H. Varnado	T. J. Simmons	E. W. Moore
1867	Half-Moon Bluff (La.)	W. H. Varnado	T. J. Simmons	W. H. Adams
1868	Union	W. H. Varnado	T. J. Simmons	W. H. Varnado
1869	Enon (La.)	?	T. J. Simmons	?
1870	Juniper Grove	W. G. Stovall	T. J. Simmons	J. C. Seale
1871	Bonner Creek (La.)	A. M. Slaydon	Hardy M. Smith	W. H. Adams
1872	Red Creek	A. M. Slaydon	T. D. Bush	W. H. Varnado
1873	Gainesville	A. M. Slaydon	T. D. Bush	Thomas Price
1874	Juniper Grove	A. M. Slaydon	T. D. Bush	A. M. Slaydon
1875	Black Creek	A. M. Slaydon	T. D. Bush	R. R. Breland
1876	Old Palestine	Thomas Price	T. D. Bush	John Williams
1877	Ten Mile	Thomas Price	T. D. Bush	Hardy Smith
1878	Bethel	Thomas Price	T. D. Bush	A. M. Slaydon
1879	Canceling Hill	Thomas Price	T. J. Mitchell	T. D. Bush
1880	Union	A. M. Slaydon	T. J. Mitchell	Thomas Price
1881	Red Creek	A. M. Slaydon	T. J. Mitchell	?
1882	Gainesville	A. M. Slaydon	T. J. Mitchell	Thomas Price
1883				

1884	Zion Hill	?	T. J. Mitchell
1885	Juniper Grove	Thomas Price	T. J. Mitchell
1886	Red Creek	J. B. Flanagan	?
1887	Union	Abner Walker	A. M. Slaydon
1888	Spring Hill	A. M. Slaydon	J. B. Flanagan
1889	Corinth	J. B. Flanagan	Abner Walker
1890	Pine Grove	J. B. Flanagan	?
1891	Bethel	J. B. Flanagan	R. N. Davis
1892	Little River	J. B. Flanagan	A. M. Slaydon
1893	Union	J. B. Flanagan	J. B. Flanagan
1894	Juniper Grove	J. B. Flanagan	W. W. Mitchell
1895	Caney	J. B. Flanagan	W. W. Mitchell
1896	Anner	J. B. Flanagan	W. W. Mitchell
1897	Spring Hill	Newton Breland	W. W. Mitchell
1898	Corinth	J. J. Thornhill	W. W. Mitchell
1899	White Sand	Newton Breland	W. W. Mitchell
1900	Bethel	J. J. Thornhill	W. W. Mitchell
1901	Sones Chapel	Thomas Dossett	W. W. Mitchell
1902	Old Palestine	Thomas Dossett	W. W. Mitchell
1903	?	Thomas Dossett	W. W. Mitchell
1904	?	Thomas Dossett	W. W. Mitchell
1905	Myrtle Grove	Thomas Dossett	W. W. Mitchell
1906	Old Palestine	Thomas Dossett	W. W. Mitchell
1907	Antioch (Har. Co.)	Thomas Dossett	W. W. Mitchell
1908	?	Thomas Dossett	W. W. Mitchell
1909	Antioch (Pic.)	J. A. Carroll	W. W. Mitchell
1910	Red Creek Increase	J. A. Carroll	W. W. Mitchell
1911	Bethel (Jack. Co.)	Thomas Dossett	W. W. Mitchell
1912	Sones Chapel	Thomas Dossett	W. W. Mitchell
1913	Antioch (Pic.)	J. Q. Sones	W. W. Mitchell
1914		?	W. W. Mitchell

1915	?	Geo. N. Thigpen
1916	Long Branch	P. R. Mitchell
1917	Sones Chapel	P. R. Mitchell
1918	Macedonia	P. R. Mitchell
1919	Mill Creek	P. R. Mitchell
1920	Pine Grove (La.)	A. Jack Spiers
1921	Old Palestine	J. W. Franklin
1922	Monroe's Creek	Thomas Dossett
1923	?	T. C. King
1924	Pine Creek	J. M. Stuart
1925	Mill Creek	J. Q. Sones
1926	Carson Springs	J. Q. Sones
1927	Henleyfield	J. Q. Sones
1928	?	J. Q. Sones
1929	Cedar Grove	J. D. Pittman
1930	Oak Grove (La.)	J. D. Pittman
1931	?	J. D. Pittman
1932	?	J. D. Pittman
1933	?	J. D. Pittman
1934	Emmanuel (La.)	G. W. Riley
1935	Old Palestine	J. A. Tynes
1936	Mt. Sinai (La.)	G. W. Riley
1937	State Line (La.)	A. Jack Spiers
1938	Oral (La.)	W. A. Thomas
1939	Pine Grove (La.)	C. P. Toney
1940	Crane's Creek (La.)	Locktie Tynes
1941	Mill Creek	Charley Lee
1942	Monroe's Creek	John E. Moore
1943	Stony Point	J. M. Stuart
1944	Mt. Calvary	E. B. Toney
1945	Lee's Chapel #2	Joe Harris

1946	Lee's Chapel #1	L. S. Walker	August Holden
1947	Oak Grove	J. Q. Sones	W. R. Allen
1948	Mill Creek	G. C. Stockstill	L. S. Walker
1949	Sycamore	J. W. Miller	August Holden
1950	Lee's Chapel #2	Charley Lee	Charley Lee
1951	Mt. Calvary	Charley Lee	Charley Lee
1952	Henleyfield	J. E. Moore	J. E. Moore
1953	Mill Creek	J. E. Moore	J. E. Moore
1954	Lee's Chapel #1	Oak Grove	Charley Lee
1955	Mt. Calvary	Charley Lee	Charley Lee
1956	Henleyfield	L. H. Parrish	L. H. Parrish
1957	Lee's Chapel #1	Wiley Madden	Wiley Madden
1958	Antioch	Tevis Ladner	Tevis Ladner
1959	Spring Branch	Charlie Lee	Charlie Lee
1960	Lee's Chapel #2	Bienville	L. D. Whitfield
1961	Oak Grove	Wiley Madden	Wiley Madden
1962	Mill Creek	J. V. Lee	J. E. Moore
1963	Lee's Chapel #2	Oak Grove	W. R. Allen
1964	College Heights	J. E. Moore, Sr.	W. R. Allen
1965	Sycamore	J. E. Moore, Sr.	W. R. Allen
1966	Lee's Chapel #2	Westlawn	W. R. Allen
1967	Temple (La.)	L. S. Walker	W. R. Allen
1968	Mill Creek	L. S. Walker	Travis Moore
1969	Ocie Crowe	L. S. Walker	Travis Moore
1970	Ocie Crowe	L. S. Walker	David E. Steele
1971	L. S. Walker	J. E. Moore, Sr.	J. E. Moore
1972	Bienville	L. D. Whitfield	L. D. Whitfield
1973	Mill Creek	L. D. Whitfield	L. D. Whitfield
1974	Oak Grove	L. D. Whitfield	L. D. Whitfield
1975	Lee's Chapel #2	Kenneth Flynt	Winfred Baker

J. E. Moore, Sr.
Richard Smith
G. C. Stockstill

L. D. Whitfield
L. D. Whitfield
L. S. Walker

Harry Burge
Harry Burge
Harry Burge

1977 Henleyfield
1978 Bienville
1979 Lee's Chapel #1

1977
1978
1979

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